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Fourteenth Century  
VERSE & PROSE



# Fourteenth Century

## VERSE & PROSE

edited by

KENNETH SISAM



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## INTRODUCTION

### I

Two periods of our early history promise most for the future of English literature—the end of the seventh with the eighth century; the end of the twelfth century with the thirteenth.

In the first a flourishing vernacular poetry is secondary in importance to the intellectual accomplishment of men like Bede and Alcuin (to name only the greatest and the last of a line of scholars and teachers) who, drawing their inspiration from Ireland and still more from Italy direct, made all the knowledge of the time their own, and learned to move easily in the disciplined forms of Latin prose.

During the second the impulse again came from without. In twelfth-century France the creative imagination was set free. In England, which from the beginning of the tenth century had depended more and more on France for guidance, the nobles, clergy, and entertainers, in whose hands lay the fortunes of literature, had a community of interest with their French compeers that has never since been approached. So England shared early in the break with tradition; and during the thirteenth century the native stock is almost hidden by the brilliant growth of a new graft.

Every activity of the mind was quickened. A luxuriant invention of forms distinguished the Gothic style in architecture. All the decorative arts showed a parallel enrichment. Oxford (at least to insular eyes) was beginning to rival Paris in learning, and to contribute to the over-production of

clerks which at first extended the province of the Church, and finally, by breaking the bounds set between ecclesiastics and laymen, played an important part in the secularization of letters. The friars, whose foundation was the last great reform of the mediaeval Church, were at the height of their good fame ; and one of them, the Franciscan Roger Bacon, by his work in philosophy, criticism, and physical science, raised the name of English thinkers to an eminence unattained since Bede. If among the older monastic orders feverish and sometimes extravagant reforms are symptoms of decline, the richness of Latin chronicles like those of Matthew Paris of St. Albans is evidence that in some of the great abbeys the monks were still learned and eloquent. Nor was Latin the only medium in which educated Englishmen were at home. They wrote French familiarly, and to some extent repaid their debt to France by transcribing and preserving Continental compositions that would else have perished.

Apart from all these activities, the manifestations of a new spirit in English vernacular works are so important, and the break with the past is so sharp, that the late twelfth century and the thirteenth would be chosen with more justice than Chaucer's time as the starting-point for a study of modern literature.

Then romance was established in English, whether we use the word to mean the imaginative searching of dark places, or in the more general sense of story-telling unhampered by a too strict regard for facts. Nothing is more remarkable in pre-Conquest works than the Anglo-Saxon's dislike of exaggeration and his devotion to plain matter of fact. Here is the account of the whales in the far North that King Alfred received from Ohthere (a Norseman, of course, but it is indifferent) :—‘ they are eight and forty ells long, and the biggest fifty ells long ’. Compare with this parsimony the full-blooded description of the griffins in *Mandeville* :—‘ But o griffoun hath

the body more gret, and is more strong, þanne eight lyouns, of suche lyouns as ben o this half; and more gret and strongere þan an hundred egles such as we han amonges vs, &c.', and you have a rough measure of the progress of fiction.

To take pleasure in stories is not a privilege reserved for favoured generations: but special conditions had transformed this pleasure into a passion. When Edward I became King in 1272, Western Europe had enjoyed a long period of internal peace, during which national hatreds burnt low. The breaking down of barriers between Bretons and French, Welsh and English, brought into the main stream of European literature the Celtic vein of idealism and delicate fancy. At the universities, in the Crusades, in the pilgrimages to Rome or Compostella, the nations mingled, each bringing from home some contribution to the common stock of stories; each gaining new experiences of the outside world, fusing them, and repeating them with embellishments. To those who stayed at home came the minstrels in the heyday of their craft—they were freemen of every Christian land who reported whatever was marvellous or amusing—and at second hand the colours of the rediscovered world seemed no less brave. It was an age greedy for entertainment that fed a rich sense of comedy on the jostling life around it; and to serve its ideals called up the great men of the past—Orpheus opening the way to fairyland, the heroes of the Trojan war, Alexander; Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and Merlin the enchanter; Charlemagne with his peers—or won back from the shadows not Eurydice alone, but Helen and Criseyde, Guinevere and Ysolde, Rymenild and Blaunceflour.

While she still claimed to direct public taste, the Church could not be indifferent to the spread of romance. A policy of uniform repression was no longer possible. Her real

power to suppress books was ineffective to bind busy tongues and minds ; popular movements were assured of a measure of practical tolerance when order competed with order and church with church for the goodwill of the people ; and even if the problem had been well defined, a disciplined attitude unvarying throughout all the divisions of the Church was not to be expected when her mantle covered clerks ranging in character from the strictest ascetic to that older Falstaff who passed under the name of Golias and found his own Muse in the tavern,—

*Tales versus facio quale vinum bibo ;  
Nihil possum scribere nisi sumpto cibo ;  
Nihil valet penitus quod ieiunus scribo,—  
Nasonem post calices carmine praeibo !*

So it came about that while some of the clergy denounced all minstrels as 'ministers of Satan', others made a truce with the more honest among them, and helped them to add to their repertories the lives of saints. Officially 'trifles and trotevales' were still censured : but it seemed good to mould the *chansons de geste* to pious uses,<sup>1</sup> and to purify the court of King Arthur, which popularity had led into dissolute ways, by introducing the quest of the Graal. And if Rolle preached sound doctrine when he ranked among the Sins of the Mouth 'to syng seculere sanges and lufe þam', their style and music were not despised as baits to catch the ears of the frivolous : when a singer began

Ase y me rod þis ender dai  
By grene wode to scche play,  
Mid herte y þohte al on a may,  
Suetest of alle þinge,—

<sup>1</sup> For illustrations from Old French, see *Les Legendes Epiques* by Professor Joseph Bédier, 4 vols., Paris 1907-, a book that maintains the easy pre-eminence of the French school in the appreciation of mediaeval literature.

the lover of secular songs would be tempted to listen ; but he would stay to hear a song of the Joys of the Virgin, to whose cult the period owes its best devotional poetry.

The power of the Church to mould the early growth of vernacular literature is so often manifested that there is a risk of underestimating the compromises and surrenders which are the signs of its wane. The figures of romance invaded the churches themselves, creeping into the carvings of the portals, along the choir-stalls, and into the historiated margins of the service books. Ecclesiastics collected and multiplied stories to adorn their sermons or illustrate their manuals of vices and virtues. In the lives of saints marvels accumulated until the word 'legend' became a synonym for an untrue tale. Though there are moments in the fourteenth century when the preponderance of the clerical over the secular element in literature seems as great as ever, by the end of the Middle Ages the trend of the conflict is plain. It is the Church that draws back to attend to her own defences, which the domestic growth of pious fictions has made everywhere vulnerable. But imaginative literature, growing always stronger and more confident, wins full secular liberty.

Emancipation from the bondage of fact, and to some extent from ecclesiastical censorship, coincided with the acquisition of a new freedom in the form of English poetry. Old English had a single metre—the long alliterative line without rime. It was best suited to narrative; it was unmusical in the sense that it could not be sung ; it had marked proclivities towards rant and noise ; and like blank verse it degenerated easily into mongrel prose.

Degeneration was far advanced in the eleventh century ; and about the end of the twelfth some large-scale experiments show that writers were no longer content with the old medium. In *Layamon*, the last great poem in this metre before the fourteenth century, internal rime and assonance

are common. Orm adopted the unrimed *septenarius* from Latin, but counted his syllables so faithfully as to produce an intolerable monotony. Then French influence turned the scale swiftly and decisively in favour of rime, so that in the extant poetry of the thirteenth century alliteration is a secondary principle or a casual ornament, but never takes the place of rime.

The sudden and complete eclipse of a measure so firmly rooted in tradition is surprising enough; but the wealth and elaborateness of the new forms that replaced it are still more matter for wonder. It is natural to think of the poets before Chaucer as children learning their art slowly and painfully, and often stumbling on the way. Yet in this one point of metrical technique they seem to reach mastery at a bound.

That the development of verse forms took place outside of English is part of the explanation. Rimed verse had its origin in Church Latin. In the monastic schools the theory of classical and post-classical metres was a principal study; and the practical art of chant was indispensable for the proper conduct of the services. Under these favourable conditions technical development was rapid, so that in such an early example of the rimed stanza as the following, taken from a poem that Godescalc wrote in exile about the year 845,—

*Magis mihi, miserule,  
Flere libet, puerule,  
Plus plorare quam cantare  
Carmen tale iubes quale,  
Amor care.  
O, cur iubes canere?*<sup>1</sup>—

the arrangement of longer and shorter lines, the management of rime or assonance, and the studied grouping of consonant sounds, give rather the impression of too much than too little artifice.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, vol. iii (ed. L. Traubé), p. 731.

From Church Latin rime passed into French, and with the twelfth century entered on a new course of development at the hands of the *trouvères* and the minstrels. The *trouvères*, or 'makers', studied versification and music as a profession, and competed in the weaving of ingenious patterns. Since their living depended on pleasing their audience, those minstrels who were not themselves composers spared no pains to sing or recite well the compositions of others; and good execution encouraged poets to try more difficult forms.

The varied results obtained in two such excellent schools of experience were offered to the English poets of the thirteenth century in exchange for the monotony of the long line; and their choice was unhesitating. In an age of lyrical poetry they learned to sing where before they could only declaim: and because the great age of craftsmanship had begun, the most intricate patterns pleased them best. Chaucer was perhaps not yet born when the over-elaboration of riming metres in English drew a protest from Robert Mannyng:<sup>1</sup> and when, after a period of hesitancy, rimed verse regained its prestige in Chaucer's prime, nameless writers again chose or invented complex stanza forms and sustained them throughout long poems. If *The Pearl* stood alone it might be accounted a literary *tour de force*: the York and Towneley plays compel the conclusion that a high standard of metrical workmanship was appreciated by the common people.

Thus far, by way of generalization and without the *caveats* proper to a literary history, I have indicated some aspects of the preceding period that are important for an understanding

<sup>1</sup> If it were made in *ryme couwee*,  
Or in strangere, or *enterlaci*,  
Pat rede Inglis it ere inowe  
pat couthe not haf coppuled a kowe,  
Pat outhere in *couwee* or in *baston*  
Som suld haf ben fordon. (*Chronicle*, Prologue, ll. 85 ff.)

of the fourteenth century. But it would be misleading to pass on without a word of reservation. There is reason to suppose that the extant texts from the thirteenth century give a truer reflection of the tastes of the upper classes, who were in closest contact with the French, than of the tastes of the people. But however this may be, they do not authorize us to speak for every part of the country. All the significant texts come from the East or the South—especially the western districts of the South, where an exceptional activity is perhaps to be connected with the old preference of the court for Winchester. In the North and the North-West a silence of five centuries is hardly broken.

## II

Judged by what survives, the literary output of the first half of the fourteenth century was small in quantity; though it must be remembered that, unlike the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries which made a fresh start and depended almost entirely on their own production, the fourteenth inherited and enjoyed a good stock of verse, to which the new compositions are a supplement.

Our first impression of this new material is negative and disappointing. The production of rimed romances falls off: their plots become increasingly absurd and mechanical; the action, so swift in the early forms, moves sluggishly through a maze of decorative descriptions; and their style at its best has the pretty inanity of *Sir Thopas*. The succession of merry tales—such as *Dame Siriz*, or *The Fox and the Wolf*<sup>1</sup> where Reynard, Isengrim, and Chauntecleer make their first bow in English—is broken until the appearance of the *Canterbury Tales* themselves. To find secular lyrics we

<sup>1</sup> Both are in Bodleian MS. Digby 86 (about 1280), and are accessible in G. H. McKnight's *Middle English Humorous Tales*, Boston 1913.

must turn to the very beginning or the very end of the century, and Chaucer himself does not recover the fresh gaiety of the earlier time.

The decline of these characteristic thirteenth-century types becomes less surprising when we notice that literature has changed camps. The South, more especially the South-West, is now almost silent: the North and the North-West reach their literary period. Minot and Rolle are Northerners, Wyclif is a Yorkshireman by birth, the York and Towneley Miracle cycles are both from the North, and with Barbour the literature of the Scots dialect begins; Robert Mannyng belongs to the North-East Midlands; while *Sir Gawayne*, *The Pearl*, and *The Destruction of Troy* represent the North-West. This predominance in the present volume rests on no mere chance of selection, since the Northern (Egerton) version of *Mandeville* might have been preferred to the Cotton; and if the number of extracts were to be increased, the texts that first come to mind—*Cursor Mundi* (about 1300),<sup>1</sup> *Prick of Conscience* (about 1340), *Morte Arthure* (about 1360), the Chester Plays—are Northern and North-Western.

It is impossible to give more than a partial explanation of the change in the area of production. But as the kinds of poetry that declined early in the fourteenth century are those that owed most to French influence, it is reasonable to assume that in the South the impulse that produced them had spent its force. The same pause is observable at the same time in France, where it coincides with the transition from oral poetry to more reflective compositions written for the eye of a reader. It is the pause between the passing of the minstrels and the coming of men of letters.

<sup>1</sup> Early English Text Society, ed. R. Morris. Unless other editions are mentioned, the longer works which are not represented by specimens may be read among the Early English Texts.

Such changes were felt first in the centres of government, learning, and commerce, whence ideas and fashions spread very slowly to the country districts. At this time the North, and above all the North-West, was the backward quarter of England, thinly populated and in great part uncultivated. An industrial age had not yet dotted it with inland cities ; and while America was still unknown the western havens were neglected.<sup>1</sup> In these old-fashioned parts the age of minstrel poetry was prolonged, and the wave of inspiration from France, though it came late, stirred the North and North-West after the South had relapsed into mediocrity or silence.

So, about the middle of the century, imaginative poetry found a new home in the West-Midlands. As before, poets turned to French for their subjects, and often contented themselves with free adaptation of French romances. They accepted such literary conventions as the Vision, which was borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose* to be the frame of *Wynnere and Wastoure* (1352)<sup>2</sup> and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*,<sup>3</sup> before it was used in *Piers Plowman* and *The Pearl* and by Chaucer. But time and distance had weakened the French influence, and the new school of poets did not catch, as the Southern poets did, the form and spirit of their models.

They preferred the unrimed alliterative verse, which from pre-Conquest days must have lived on in the remote Western counties without a written record ; and for a generation rime is overshadowed. The suddenness and importance of this revival in a time otherwise barren of poetry will appear from a list of the principal alliterative poems that are commonly assigned to the third quarter of the century :—*Wynnere and*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Sir Israel Gollancz, Oxford 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Gollancz, Oxford 1915.

*Wasloure, The Parlement of the Thre Ages, Joseph of Arimathie* (the first English Graal romance), *William of Palerne, Piers Plowman* (A-text), *Patience, Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, The Destruction of Troy, Morte Arthure*.

At the time alliterative verse was fitted to become the medium of popular literature. Prose would not serve, because its literary life depends on books and readers. Up to the end of the century (if we exclude sermons and religious or technical treatises, where practical considerations reinforced a Latin tradition) the function of prose in English literature is to translate Latin or French prose;<sup>1</sup> and even this narrow province is sometimes invaded by verse. Yet it was not easy to write verse that depended on number of syllables, quantity, or rime. The fall of inflexions brought confusion on syllabic metres; there were great changes in the quantity and quality of vowels; and these disturbances affected the dialects unevenly.<sup>2</sup> It must have been hard enough for a poet to make rules for himself: but popularity involved the recital of his work by all kinds of men in all kinds of English, when the rimes would be broken and the rhythm lost. It is perhaps unfair to call Michael of Northgate's doggerel (p. 33) to witness the misfortunes of rimed metres. But the text of *Sir Orfeo* from the Auchinleck manuscript shows how often Englishmen who were nearly contemporary with the composer had lost the tune of his verses. The more fortunate makers of alliterative poems, whose work depended on the stable yet elastic frame of stress and initial consonants, possessed a master-key to the dialects.

Adaptability made easier the diffusion of alliterative verse: but its revival was not due to a deliberate choice on practical grounds. It was a phase of a larger movement, which may

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer's prose rendering of the *Metra* of Boethius is an apparent exception, but Jean de Meung's French prose version lay before him.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix.

be described as a weakening of foreign and learned influences, and a recovery of the native stock. And the metrical form is only the most obvious of the old-fashioned elements that reappeared. In spirit, too, the authors of the alliterative school have many points of kinship with the Old English poets. They are more moderate than enthusiastic. Left to themselves, their imaginations move most easily among sombre shapes and in sombre tones. They have not the intellectual brilliance and the wit of the French poets; and when they laugh—which is not often—the lightness of the thirteenth century is rarer than the rough note of the comic scenes in the *Towneley* plays. It is hard to say how much the associations and aptitudes of the verse react on its content: but *Sumer is icumen in*, which is the essence of thirteenth-century poetry, is barely conceivable in Old English, where even the cuckoo's note sounded melancholy; and it would come oddly from the poets of the middle fourteenth century, who have learned from the French *trouvères* the convention of spring, with sunshine, flowers, and singing birds, but seem unable to put away completely the memory of winter and rough weather.

In the last quarter of the century the tide of foreign influence runs strong again; and the work of Gower and Chaucer discloses radical changes in the conditions of literature which are the more important because they are permanent. The literary centre swings back to the capital—London now instead of Winchester—which henceforth provides the models for authors of any pretensions throughout England and across the Scottish border. In Chaucer we have for the first time a layman, writing in English for secular purposes, who from the range and quality of his work may fairly claim to be ranked among men of letters. The strictly clerical writers had been content to follow the Scriptures, the Fathers and commentators, the service books and legendaries; and Chaucer

does not neglect their tradition.<sup>1</sup> The minstrels had exploited a popular taste for merry tales 'that sownen into synne'; and he borrowed so gladly from them that many have doubted his repentance.<sup>2</sup> But his models are men of letters:—the Latin poets headed by Ovid, who was Gower's favourite too; French writers, from the satirical Jean de Meung to makers of studied 'balades, roundels, virelayes' like Machaut and Deschamps; and the greater Italian group—Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Dante. Keeping such company, he was bound to reject the rusticity of the alliterative school, and the middle way followed by those who added a tag of rime at the end of a rimeless series (as in *Sir Gawayne*), or invented stanzas in which alliteration remains, but is subservient to rime (as in *The Pearl* and the York plays). After his day, even for Northerners who wish to write well, there will be no more 'rum-ram-ruf by lettre':<sup>3</sup>

## III

In outlining the main movements of the century, I have mentioned incidentally the fortunes of certain kinds of composition,—the restriction of the lyrical form to devotional uses; the long dearth in the records of humorous tales; the decadence of romances in rime, and the flourishing of alliterative romances. The popular taste for stories was still unsatisfied, and guided authors, from Robert Mannyng to Chaucer,

<sup>1</sup> And for to speke of other holynesse,  
He hath in prose translated Boece,  
And of the Wrechede Engendryng of Mankynde  
As man may in pope Innocent ifynde,  
And made the Lyfe also of Seynt Cecile;  
He made also, gon ys a grete while,  
Origenes upon the Maudeleyne.

(*Legend of Good Women*, Prologue A, ll. 424 ff.)

<sup>2</sup> *Parson's Tale*, at the end.

<sup>3</sup> *Prologue to Parson's Tale*, l. 43.

in their choice of subjects or method of treatment. Translators were busier than ever in making Latin and French works available to a growing public who understood no language but English; and of necessity the greater number of our specimens are translations, ranging from the crude literalness of Michael of Northgate to the artistic adaptation seen in Gower's tales. But the chief new contribution of the century is the vernacular Miracle Play, with which the history of the English drama begins.

Miracle plays grew out of the services for the church festivals of Easter and Christmas. Towards the end of the tenth century a representation of the Three Maries at the Sepulchre is provided for in the English Easter service. Later, the Shepherds seeking the Manger and the Adoration of the Magi are represented in the services for the Christmas season. In their early form these dramatic ceremonies consist of a few sentences of Latin which were sung by the clergy with a minimum of dignified action.

From the eleventh to the thirteenth century the primitive form underwent a parallel development in all parts of Europe. Records of Miracles in England are at this time scanty and casual:—Matthew Paris notes one at Dunstable because precious copes were borrowed for it from St. Albans, and were accidentally burnt; another, given in the church-yard at Beverley, is mentioned because a boy who had climbed to a post of vantage in the church, and thence higher to escape the sextons, fell and yet took no harm. But the scantiness of references before 1200 is in itself evidence of growth without active enemies, and the few indications agree with the general trend observable on the Continent. The range of subjects was extended to include the acts of saints, and the principal scenes of sacred history from the Fall of Lucifer to the Last Judgement. Single scenes were elaborated to something like the scale familiar in Middle English. By the end

of the twelfth century French begins to appear beside or in place of Latin ; the French verses were spoken, not sung ; the plays were often acted outside the church ; and it may be assumed that laymen were admitted as performers alongside the minor clergy, who seem to have been the staunchest supporters of the plays.

The Miracle had become popular, and there is soon evidence of its perversion by the grotesque imaginings of the people. In 1207 masking and buffoonery in the churches at Christmas came under the ban of Pope Innocent III, and his prohibition was made permanent in the Decretals. Henceforth we must look for new developments to the Miracles played outside the church. To these freedom from the restraints of the sacred building did not bring a better reputation. Before 1250 the most influential churchman of the time, Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln, who was far from being a kill-joy, urged his clergy to stamp out Miracles ; and later William of Wadinton, and Robert Mannyng his translator, while allowing plays on the Resurrection and the Nativity if decently presented in the church, condemn the Miracles played in open places, and blame those of the clergy who encouraged them by lending vestments to the performers.<sup>1</sup>

From the first three-quarters of the fourteenth century, which include the critical period for the English Miracles, hardly a record survives. The memoranda on which the history of the English plays is based begin toward the end of the century, and the texts are drawn from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts. Hence it will be simplest to set out the changes that were complete by 1400 without attempting to establish their true sequence ; and to disregard the existence, side by side with the fully developed types, of all the gradations between them and the primitive form that might result from stunted growth or degeneration.

<sup>1</sup> *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 4640 ff.

The early references point to the representation of single plays or small groups of connected scenes; and such isolated pieces survive as long as there are Miracles: Hull, for instance, specialized on a play of Noah's Ship. But now we have to record the appearance of series or cycles of plays, covering in chronological order the whole span of sacred history. Complete cycles were framed on the Continent as early as the end of the thirteenth century. In England they are represented by the York, Towneley (Wakefield), and Chester plays, and the so-called *Ludus Coventriæ*.<sup>1</sup> There are also records or fragments of cycles from Beverley, Coventry, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Norwich. The presentation of the cycle sometimes occupied a day (York), sometimes two or three successive days (Chester), and sometimes a part was carried over to the next year's festival (*Ludus Coventriæ*).

The production of a long series of scenes in the open requires fine weather, and once the close connexion with the church services had been broken, there was a tendency to throw forward the presentation into May or June. The Chester plays were given in Whitsun-week—at least in later times. But normally the day chosen in fourteenth-century England was the Feast of Corpus Christi (the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday), which was made universal throughout the Church in 1311. So the Miracles get the generic name of 'Corpus Christi Plays'.

The feature of the Corpus Christi festival was its procession. As a result either of inclusion in this procession or of imitation, the cycles came to be played processionaly: each play had its stage on wheels which halted at fixed

<sup>1</sup> These are not the Coventry plays, of which only two survive, but a cycle of plays torn from their local connexions (ed. J. O. Halliwell, Shakespeare Society, 1841). The title is due to a seventeenth-century librarian, who possibly had heard of no Miracle cycle but the famous one at Coventry.

stations in the streets, and at each station the play was re-enacted. This was the usage at York, Wakefield, Chester, Coventry, and Beverley. The older practice of presentation on fixed stages was followed in the *Ludus Coventriæ*.

Our last records from the end of the thirteenth century indicated that the open-air Miracle had been disowned by the Church from which it sprang. Yet a century later processional performances appear on a scale that postulates strong and competent management. In the interim the control of the great cycles had passed from the clergy to the municipalities, who laid upon each guild of craftsmen within their jurisdiction the duty of presenting a play. Ecclesiastics still wrote Miracles, and occasionally performed them; but when Canterbury, London, Salisbury, Winchester, Oxford, which have no extant texts and few records of popular performances, are named against York, Wakefield, Chester, Coventry, Beverley, it is obvious that official Church influences were no longer the chief factor in the development of Miracles. For their growth and survival in England the cycles depended on the interest of powerful corporations, willing to undertake the financial responsibility of their production, and able to maintain them against the attacks of the Lollards, or change of policy in the orthodox Church, or the fickleness of fashion in entertainment.

The steps by which the English guilds assumed the guardianship of the plays cannot now be retraced. We must be content to note that the undertaking called for just that combination of religious duty, civic patriotism, and pride of craft that inspired the work of the guilds in their best days. And the clergy had every reason to welcome the disciplining by secular authority of a wayward offspring that had grown beyond their own control. The York texts, which bring us nearest to the time when the corporations and guilds first took charge of the Miracles, are very creditable to the taste of the

city, and must represent a reform on the irresponsible productions that scandalized the thirteenth century. The vein of coarseness in some of the comic scenes of the Towneley group seems to be due to a later recrudescence of incongruous elements.

The last great change to be noted was inevitable when the plays became popular: they were spoken in English and in rimed verse, with only an occasional tag or stage direction or hymn in Latin to show their origin. The variety of the texts, and of the modes and purposes of their representation, make it impossible to assign a date to the transition that would be generally applicable; and its course was not always the same. There is an example of direct translation from Latin in the Shrewsbury fragments,<sup>1</sup> which contain one actor's cues and parts in three plays: first the Latin foundation is given in verse or prose, and then its expansion in English alternate rime. That translations were sometimes made from the French is proved by the oldest known manuscript of a Miracle in English—an early fourteenth-century fragment of a Nativity play, consisting of a speech in French followed by its rendering in the same stanza form.<sup>2</sup> But there is no reason to doubt that as English gained ground and secularization became more complete, original composition appeared side by side with translation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shrewsbury School MS. Mus. iii. 42 (early fifteenth century), ed. Skeat, *Academy*, January 4 and January 11, 1890. The fragments are (i) the part of the Third Shepherd in a Nativity play; (ii) the part of the third Mary in a Resurrection play; (iii) the part of Cleophas in *Pilgrims to Emmaus*. Manly, who reprints the fragments in *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama*, vol. i (1900), pp. xxvi ff., notes that these plays seem to have been church productions rather than secular.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times Literary Supplement* of May 26 and June 2, 1921. The fragment comes from Bury St. Edmunds. The dialect is E. Midland.

<sup>3</sup> On the production of Miracle plays see L. Toulmin Smith, *Introduction to York Plays*, Oxford 1885; and A. F. Leach in *An English Miscellany presented to Dr. Furnivall*, pp. 205 ff.

For one other kind of writing the fourteenth century is notable—its longer commentaries on contemporary life and the art of living. In the twelfth century England had an important group of satirical poets who wrote in Latin; and in the thirteenth there are many French and a few English satires. Their usual topic was the corruption of the religious orders, varied by an occasional attack on some detail of private folly, such as extravagance in dress or the pride of serving-men. These pieces are mostly in the early French manner, where so much wit tempers the indignation that one doubts whether the satirist would be really happy if he succeeded in destroying the buits of his ridicule.

This is not the spirit of the fourteenth century, when a darker side of life is turned up and reported by men whose eyes are not quick to catch brightness. The number of short occasional satires in English increases, but they are seldom gay. The greater writers—Rolle, Wiclf, Langland, Gower—were obsessed by the troubles of their time, and are less satirists than moralists. Certainly the events of the century gave little cause for optimism. The wane of enthusiasm throughout Europe and the revival of national jealousies are evident very early in the failure of all attempts to organize an effective Crusade after 1291, when the Turks conquered the last Christian outposts in Palestine. There was no peace, for the harassing wars with Scotland were followed by the long series of campaigns against France that sapped the strength of both countries for generations. The social and economic organization was shaken by the severest famines (1315-21) and the greatest pestilence (1349) in English history, and both famine and plague came back more than once before the century was done. The conflict of popes and anti-popes divided the Western Church, while England faced the domestic problem of Lollardry. There was civil revolt in 1381; and the century closed with the deposition of

Richard II. A modern historian balances the account with the growth of parliamentary institutions, the improving status of the labouring classes, and the progress of trade: but in so far as these developments were observable at all by contemporary writers, they were probably interpreted as signs of general decay.

In such an atmosphere the serene temper with which Robert Mannyng handles the sins and follies of his generation did not last long. Rolle tried to associate with men in order to improve their way of life: but his intensely personal attitude towards every problem, and the low value he set on the quality of reasonableness, made success impossible; and after a few querulous outbursts against his surroundings, he found his genius by withdrawing into pure idealism.

Wiclf was the one writer who was also a practical reformer. Having made up his mind that social evils could be remedied only through the Church, and that the first step was a thorough reform of the government, doctrine, and ministers of the Church, he acted with characteristic logic. The vices and follies of the people he regarded as secondary, and refused to dissipate his controversial energies upon them. His strength was reserved for a grim, ordered battle against ecclesiastical abuses; and while he pulled down, he did not neglect to lay foundations that outlasted his own defeat.

*Piers Plowman* gives a full picture of the times and their bewildering effect on the mind of a sincere and moderate man. Its author belonged to the loosely organized secular clergy who, by reason of their middle position, served as a kind of cement in a ramshackle society. He has no new system and no practical schemes of reform to expound—only perplexing dreams of a simple Christian who, with Conscience and Reason as his guides, faces in turn the changing shapes of evil. He attacks them bravely enough, and still they seem to evade him; because he shrinks from

destroying their roots when he finds them too closely entwined with things to which his habits or affections cling. In the end he cannot find a sure temporal foothold: yet he has no vision of a Utopia to come in which society will be reorganized by men's efforts. That idea brought no comfort to his generation who, standing on the threshold of a new order, looked longingly backward.

Passing over Gower, whose direct studies of contemporary conditions were written in Latin and French, we come round again to Chaucer. He has not Rolle's idealism, or Wiclif's fighting spirit, or Langland's earnestness—in fact, he has no great share of moral enthusiasm. A man of the world with keen eyes and the breadth of outlook and sympathy that Gower lacked, he is at home in a topsy-turvy medley of things half-dead with things half-grown, and the thousand disguises of convention and propriety through which the new life peeped to mock at its puzzled and despairing repressors were to him a never-ending entertainment. *Ubique iam abundat turpitudo terrena*, says Rolle in an alliterative flight, *vilissima voluptas in viris vacillat*; . . . *bellant ut bestiae*; *breviantur beati*; *nullus est nimirum qui nemini non nocet*. That was one side, but it was not the side that interested Chaucer. He had the spirit of the thirteenth-century poets grown up, with more experience, more reflection, and a mellower humour, but not less good temper and capacity for enjoyment. He no longer laughs on the slightest occasion for sheer joy of living: but he would look elvishly at Richard Rolle—a hermit who made it a personal grievance that people left him solitary, a fugitive from his fellows who unconsciously satisfied a very human and pleasing love for companionship and admiration by becoming the centre of a coterie of women recluses. A world that afforded such infinite amusement to a quiet observer was after all not a bad place to live in.

## IV

Chaucer, who suffers when read in extracts, is not represented in this book, although without him fourteenth-century literature is a body without a head. But in the choice of literary forms and subjects, I have aimed at illustrating the variety of interest that is to be found in the writings of lesser men.

It may be asked whether the choice of specimens gives a true idea of the taste and accomplishment of the age. This issue is raised by Professor Carleton Brown's Afterword in the second volume of his *Register of Middle English Religious and Didactic Verse*, a book that will be to generations of investigators a model of unselfish research. There he emphasizes the popularity of long poems, and especially of long didactic poems, as evidenced by the relatively great number of manuscript copies that survive. *The Prick of Conscience* leads with ninety-nine manuscripts, against sixty-nine of *The Canterbury Tales*, and forty-seven of *Piers Plowman*. What is to be said of a book that, impoverished by the exclusion of Chaucer, passes by also the most popular poem of his century?

I would rest an apology on the conditions under which manuscript copies came into being and survived; and begin with Michael of Northgate as he brings his *Ayenbyte* to an end in the October of 1340, before the short days and the numbing cold should come to make writing a pain. The book has no elegance that would commend it to special care, for Dan Michael is a dry practical man, as indifferent to the graces of style as to the luxury of silky vellum and miniatures stiff with gold and colour. But from his cell it goes into the library of his monastery—a library well ordered and well catalogued, and (as if to guarantee security) boasting the continuous possession of books that Gregory the Great gave to the first

missionaries. We know its place exactly—the fourth shelf of press XVI. And there it remained safe until the days of intelligent private collectors, passing finally with the Arundel library to the British Museum. The course was not often so smooth, for of two dozen manuscripts left by Michael to St. Augustine's, Dr. James, in the year 1903, could identify only four survivors in as many different libraries. But the example is enough to illustrate a proposition that will not easily be refuted:—the chances of an English mediaeval manuscript surviving greatly depend on its eligibility for a place in the library of a religious house, since these are the chief sources of the manuscripts that have come down to us.

The attitude of the Church towards the vernacular literature of the later Middle Ages did not differ materially from her attitude towards the classics in earlier times, though the classics had always the greater dignity. Literary composition as a pure art was not encouraged. Entertainment for its own sake was discountenanced. The religious houses were to be centres of piety and learning; and if English were admitted at all in the strongholds of Latin and French, a work of unadorned edification like *The Prick of Conscience* would make very suitable reading for those who craved relaxation from severer studies. There were, of course, individuals among the professed religious who indulged a taste for more worldly literature; but the surviving catalogues of libraries that were formed under the eye of authority show a marked discrimination in favour of didactic works.

In England the private libraries of fourteenth-century laymen were relatively insignificant. But Guy, Earl of Warwick, in 1315 left an exceptionally rich collection to the Abbey of Bordesley, which failed to conserve the legacy. The list was first printed in Todd's *Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer* (1810),<sup>1</sup> and (among devotional works and lives of saints that

<sup>1</sup> p. 161.

merge into religious romances like *Joseph of Arimathea and the Graal*, *Titus and Vespasian*, and *Constantine*) it includes most of the famous names of popular history:—Lancelot, Arthur and Modred; Charlemagne, Doon of Mayence, Aimery of Narbonne, Girard de Vienne, William of Orange, Thibaut of Arraby, Doon of Nanteuil, Guy of Nanteuil, William Longespée, Fierebras; with two Alexander romances, a *Troy Book*, a *Brut*; the love story of *Amadas e Idoine*; the romance *de Guy e de la Reygne 'tu! enterement'*; a book of physic and surgery; and a miscellany—*un petit rouge livere en lequel sount conteneuz mous diverses choses*. Yet even a patron so well disposed to secular poems did little to perpetuate the manuscripts of English verse. His education enabled him to draw from the fountain head, and most of his books were French.

Neither in the libraries of the monasteries, nor in the libraries of the great nobles, should we expect to find a true mirror of popular taste. The majority of the people knew no language but English; and the relative scarcity of books of every kind, which even among the educated classes made the hearers far outnumber the readers, was at once a cause and a symptom of illiteracy: the majority of the people could not read. This leads to a generalization that is cardinal for every branch of criticism:—up to Chaucer's day, the greater the popularity of an English poem, the less important becomes the manuscript as a means of early transmission. The text, which would have been comparatively safe in the keeping of scribe, book, and reader, passes to the uncertain guardianship of memorizer, reciter, and listener; so that sometimes it is wholly lost, and sometimes it suffers as much change in a generation as would a classical text in a thousand years. Already Robert Mannyng laments the mutilation of *Sir Tristrem* by the 'sayers' (who could hardly be expected to avoid faults of improvisation and omission in the recitation of

so long a poem from memory);<sup>1</sup> and his regret would have been keener if he could have looked ahead another hundred years to see how the texts of the verse romances paid the price of popularity by the loss of crisp phrases and fresh images, and the intrusion of every mode of triteness.

Of course manuscripts of the longer secular poems were made and used,—mean, stunted copies from which the travelling entertainer could refresh his memory or add to his stock of tales; fair closet copies that would enable well-to-do admirers to renew their pleasure when no skilled minstrel was by; and, occasionally, compact libraries of romance, like the Auchinleck manuscript, which must have been the treasure of some great household that enjoyed ‘romanz-reding on þe bok’—the pastime that encouraged the rise of prose romances in the late Middle Ages. But as a means of circulation for popular verse, distinguished from learned verse and from prose, the book was of secondary importance in its own time, and was always subject to exceptional risks. The fates of three stories in different kinds, all demonstrably favourites in the fourteenth century, will be sufficient illustration: of *Floris and Blanche-flour*, one of the best of the early romances in the courtly style,

<sup>1</sup>

I see in song, in sedgeyng tale  
 Of Erceldoun and of Kendale,  
 Non þam says as þai þam wroght,  
 And in þer sayng it semes noght.  
 þat may þou here in *Sir Tristrem*—  
 Ouer gestes it has þe steem,  
 Ouer alle þat is or was,  
 If men it sayd as made Thomas:  
 But I here it no man so say,  
 þat of som copple som is away.

(*Chronicle*, Prologue, ll. 93 ff.).

Robert blames the vanity of the reciters more than their memories, on the excellence of which Petrarch remarks in his account of the minstrels: *Sunt homines non magni ingenii, magnae vero memoriae, magnaegit diligentiae* (to Boccaccio, *Rerum Senilium*, Bk. v, ep. ii).

several manuscripts survive, but when all are assembled the beginning of the story is still wanting; of *Havelok*, typical of the homely style, one imperfect copy and a few charred fragments of another are extant; of the *Tale of Wade*, that was dear to 'olde wydwes',<sup>1</sup> and yet considered worthy to entertain the noble Criseyde,<sup>2</sup> no text has come down. Evidently, to determine the relative popularity of the longer tales in verse we need not so much a catalogue of extant manuscripts, as a census, that cannot now be taken, of the repertories of the entertainers.

If the manuscript life of the longer secular poems was precarious, the chances of the short pieces—songs, ballads, jests, comic dialogues, lampoons—were still worse. Since they were composed for the day without thought of the future, and were no great charge on the ordinary memory, the chief motives for writing them down were absent; and no doubt the professional minstrel found that to secure his proprietary rights against competitors, he must be chary of giving copies of his best things. Many would never be put into writing; some were jotted down on perishable wax; but parchment, always too expensive for ephemeral verse, was reserved for special occasions. In France, in the thirteenth century, Henri d'Andeli adds a touch of dignity to his poem celebrating the memory of a distinguished patron by inscribing it on parchment instead of the wax tablets he used for lighter verses.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer, *Merchant's Tale*, ll. 211 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. iii, l. 614.

<sup>3</sup> *Et icil cler qui ce trova . . .*

*Por ce qu'il est de verite,  
Ne l'apele mie flable,  
Ne l'a pas escrit en tablel,  
Ains l'a escrit en parchamin:  
Par bois, per plains et par chamins,  
Par bors, par chateals, par cites  
Vorra qu'il soit bien recitez.*

(*Oeuvres*, ed. A. Héron, Paris 1881, p. 40.)

In England in 1305, a West-Country swashbuckler, whom fear of the statute against *Trailebastouns* kept in the green-wood, relieves his offended dignity by composing a poem half apologetic, half minatory, and chooses as the safest way of publication to write it on parchment and throw it in the high road :—

*Cest rym fust set al bois desous vn lorer,  
La chaunte merle, russinole, e crye l'esperuer.  
Escript estoit en parchemyn pur mout remembrer,  
Et gille en haut chemyn, qe vn le dust trouer.<sup>1</sup>*

These loose sheets or tiny rolls<sup>2</sup> rarely survive, and the preservation of their contents, as of pieces launched still more carelessly on the world, depends on the happy chance of inclusion in a miscellany; quotation in a larger work; or entry on a fly-leaf, margin, or similar space left blank in a book already written.

Most productive, though not very common in the fourteenth century, are the miscellanies of short pieces—volumes like Earl Guy's 'little red book containing many divers things'—in which early collectors noted down the scraps that interested

<sup>1</sup> 'This rime was made in the wood beneath a bay-tree, where blackbird and nightingale sing and the sparrow-hawk cries. It was written on parchment for a record, and flung in the high road so that folk should find it.' *The Political Songs of England*, ed. T. Wright (London 1839), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> A rare example of a roll made small for convenience of carrying is the British Museum Additional MS. 23986. It is about three inches wide and, in its imperfect state, twenty-two inches long, so that when rolled up it is not much bigger than one's finger. On the inside it contains a thirteenth-century *Song of the Barons* in French (T. Wright, *Political Songs*, 1839, pp. 59 ff.); on the outside, two scenes from a Middle English farce called *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* (Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, pp. 324 ff.) which, like so many happy experiments of the earlier time, appears to have no successor in the fourteenth century.

them. A codex of West-Country origin, MS. Harley 2253 in the British Museum, preserves among French poems such as the complaint of the *Trailebastoun*, a group of English songs that includes *Lenten is Come* and *Alysoun*. Most of its numbers are unique, and the loss of this one volume would have swept away the best part of our knowledge of the early Middle English secular lyrics.

Of survival by quotation there is an example in the history of the Letter of Theodric, which lies behind Mannyng's tale of the Dancers of Colbek; and the circumstances are worth lingering over both for the number of by-paths they open to speculation, and for the glimpse they give of Wilton in a century from which there are few records of the nunnery outside the grim, tax-gatherer's entries of Domesday.

A few years before the Conquest, Theodric the foreigner, still racked by the curse that was laid on Bovo's company, made his way from the court of Edward the Confessor to the shrine of St. Edith. As he walked through the quiet valley to Wilton in the spring of the year, we may be sure the thought came to him that here at last was the spot where a man wearied with wandering from land to land, from shrine to shrine, might hope to be cured and to set up his rest. From the moment he reaches the abbey it is impossible not to admire his feeling for dramatic effect. By a paroxysm of quaking he terrifies the peasants; but to the weeping nuns he tells his story discreetly; and, lest a doubt should remain, produces from his scrip a letter in which St. Bruno, the great Pope Leo IX, vouches for all. It is notable that at this stage the convent appear to have taken no steps to record a story so marvellous and so well authenticated; and had Theodric continued his restless wandering we should know of him as little as is known of three others from the band of carollers, who had preceded him at Wilton with a similar story. But when he obtains leave to sleep beside

the shrine of St. Edith, and in the morning of the great feast of Lady Day wakes up healed, exalting the fame of their patron saint who had lifted the curse where all the saints of Europe had failed, then, and then only, the convent order that an official record should be made, and the letter copied : *Hec in presencia Brichtive ipsius loci abbatisse declarata et patriis litteris<sup>1</sup> sunt mandata.* Henceforth it exists only as a chapter in the Acts of St. Edith, and as such it lay before Robert of Brunne. Of the other communities or private persons visited by Theodric (who, whether saint or *faillour*, certainly did not produce his letter for the first and last time at Wilton) none have preserved his memory. It would be hard to find a better example of the power of the clergy in early times to control the keys to posterity, or of the practical considerations which, quite apart from merit or curiosity, governed the preservation of legends.

But it is the verses casually jotted down in unrelated books that bring home most vividly the slenderness of the thread of transmission. A student has committed *Now Springs the Spray* to solitary imprisonment between the joyless leaves of an old law book. The song of the Irish Dancer and *The Maid of the Moor* were scribbled, with some others from a minstrel's stock, on the fly-leaf of a manuscript now in the Bodleian. On a blank page of another a prudent man (who used vile ink, long since faded) has written the verses that banish rats, much as a modern householder might treasure

<sup>1</sup> *Patriis litteris* according to Schröder and Gaston Paris means 'English language', but if it is not a mere flourish, it means rather the 'English script' in which the Latin letter was copied, as distinct from the foreign hand of Theodric's original letter. What 'English script' meant at Wilton in 1065 is a question of some delicacy. The spelling *Folcpoldus* for *Folcwoldus* in some later copies of the Wilton text must be due to confusion of *p* and Anglo-Saxon *p* = *w*. This would be decisive for 'Anglo-Saxon script' if it occurred anywhere but in a proper name.

up some annihilating prescription. To these waifs the chance of survival did not come twice, and to a number incalculable it never came.

It has been the purpose of this digression to bring the extant literature into perspective: not to raise useless regrets for what is lost, since we can learn only from what remains; nor to contest the value of statistics of surviving copies as a proof of circulation, provided the works compared are similar in length and kind, and are represented in enough manuscripts to make figures significant; nor yet to deny that didactic verse bulks large in the output of the fourteenth century: it could not be otherwise in an anxious age, when the scarcity of remains gives everything written in English a place in literary history, and when for almost everything verse was preferred to prose. And it seemed better to redress the balance of chance by stealing from the end of the thirteenth century a few fragments that following generations would not forget, than to lend colour to the suggestion that ninety-nine of the men of Chaucer's century enjoyed *The Prick of Conscience* for every one that caught up the refrain of *Now Springs the Spray*, or danced through *The Maid of the Moor*, or sang the praises of Alison.

## V

However much a maker of excerpts may stretch his commission to give variety, it is in vain if the reader will not do his part; for it lies with him to find interest. Really no effective attack can be made on a crust of such diversified hardness until the reader looks at his text as a means of winning back something of the life of the past, and feels a pleasure in the battle against vagueness.

The first step is to find out the verbal meaning. Strange words, that force themselves on the attention and are easily

found in dictionaries and glossaries, try a careful reader less than groups of common words—such lines as

*þe fairest leuedi, for þe nones,  
þat miȝt gon on bodi and bones* II 53-4

which, if literally transposed into modern English, are nonsense. Those who think it is beneath the dignity of an intelligent reader to weigh such gossamer should turn to Zupitza's commentary on the Fifteenth Century Version of *Guy of Warwick*,<sup>1</sup> and see how a master among editors of Middle English relishes every phrase, missing nothing, and yet avoiding the opposite fault of pressing anything too hard. For these tags, more or less emptied of meaning through common use, and ridiculous by modern standards, have their importance in the economy of spoken verse, where a good voice carried them off. They helped out the composer in need of a rime; the reciter on his feet, compelled to improvise; and the audience who, lacking the reader's privilege to linger over close-packed lines, welcomed familiar turns that by diluting the sense made it easier to receive.

Repeated reading will bring out clearly the formal elements of style—the management of rime and alliteration in verse, the grouping and linking of clauses in prose, the cadences in both verse and prose: and before the value of a word or phrase can be settled it is often necessary to inquire how far its use was dictated by technical conditions, compliance with which is sometimes ingenuous to the point of crudity. Where a prose writer would be content with *Mathew sayth*, an alliterative poet elaborates (viii a 234) into :

*Mathew with mannes face mouthed þise wordis*

and in such a context *mouthed* cannot be pressed. The frequent oaths in the speeches in *Piers Plowman* are no more than counters in the alliteration: being meaningless they are

<sup>1</sup> Early English Text Society, extra series, 1875-6.

selected to prop up the verse, just as the barrenest phrases in the poem *On the Death of Edward III* owe their inclusion to the requirements of rime. Again, it will be easier to acquiesce in a forced sense of *bende* in

*On bent much baret bende* v 47

when it is observed that rime and alliteration so limit the poet's choice that no apter word could be used. Conversely, in the absence of disturbing technical conditions, a reader who finds nonsense should suspect his understanding of the text, or the soundness of the text, before blaming the author.

When the sense expressed and the methods of expression have been studied, it remains to examine the implications of the words—an endless task and perhaps the most entertaining of all. Take as a routine example the place where the Green Knight, preparing a third time to deliver his blow, says to Gawayne—

*Halde þe now þe hyze hode þat Arbur þe razt,  
And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may*  
v 229 f.

A recent translator renders very freely :

‘but yet thy hood up-pick,  
Haply ’twill cover thy neck when I the buffet strike’—  
though the etiquette of decapitation, and the delicacy of the stroke that the Green Knight has in mind, require just the opposite interpretation :—Gawayne's hood has become disarranged since he bared his neck (v 188), and the Green Knight wants a clear view to make sure of his aim. An observation of Gaston Paris on the Latin story of the Dancers of Colbek will show how much an alert mind enriches the reading of a text with precise detail. From the incident of Ave's arm he concludes that the dancers did not form a closed ring, but a line with Bovo leading (1 55) and Ave, as the last comer (1 43-54), at its end, so that she had one arm free which her brother seized in his attempt to drag her away (1 111 ff).

Intensive reading should be combined with discursive. Intensive reading cultivates the habit of noticing detail ; and it is a sound rule of textual criticism to interpret a composition first in the light of the evidence contained within itself. For instance, the slight flicker in the verse

*Sche most wiþ him no lenger abide* II 330

should recall as surely as a cross-reference the earlier line

*No durst wiþ hir no leng abide* II 84

and raise the question whether in both places in the original work the comparative had not the older form *leng*. Discursive reading is a safeguard against the dangers of a narrow experience, and especially against the assumption that details of phrase, style, or thought are peculiar to an author or composition, when in fact they are common to a period or a kind. A course of both will enable the reader to cope with a school of critics who rely on superficial resemblances to strip the mask from anonymous authors and attach their works to some favoured name. Whether *Sir Gawayne* and *The Destruction of Troy* are from the same hand is still seriously debated. Both are alliterative poems ; but it is impossible to read ten lines from each aloud without realizing the wide gap that divides their rhythms. The differences of spirit are more radical still. The facility of the author of *The Destruction* is attained at the cost of surrender to the metre. Given pens, ink, vellum, and a good original, he could go on turning out respectable verses while human strength endured. And because his meaning is all on the surface, the work does not improve on better acquaintance. The author of *Sir Gawayne* is an artist who never ceases to struggle with a harsh medium. He has the rare gift of visualizing every scene in his story : image succeeds image, each so sharply drawn as to suggest that he had his training in one of the schools of miniature-painting for which early England was famous. It is this gift of the painter that, more than likeness of dialect or

juxtaposition in the manuscript, links *Sir Gawayne* with *The Pearl*.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the purpose of a worker in Middle English should be nothing less than to read sensitively, with the fullest possible understanding. Of such a purpose many *curricula* give no hint. Nor could it be deduced readily from the latest activities of research, where the tendency is more and more to leave the main road (which should be crowded if the study is to thrive) for side-tracks and by-paths of side-tracks in which the sense of direction and proportion is easily lost.

That much may be accomplished by specialists following a single line of approach has been demonstrated by the philologists, who have burrowed tirelessly to present new materials to a world which seldom rewards their happiest elucidations with so much as a 'Well said, old mole!' The student of literature (in the narrower modern sense of the word) brings a new range of interests. He will be disappointed if he expects to find a finished art, poised and sustained, in an age singularly afflicted with growing pains; but there are compensations for any one who is content to catch glimpses of promise, and—looking back and forward, and aside to France—to take pleasure in tracing the rise and development of literary forms and subjects. It is still not enough. The specialist in language as a science, or in literature as an art, may find the Sixth Passus of *Piers Plowman* (viii a) or the Wyclifite sermon (xi b) of secondary interest. Yet both are primary documents, the one for the history of society, the other for the history of religion.

There is no escape from a counsel of perfection:—whoever enters on a course of mediaeval studies must reckon as a defect his lack of interest in any side of the life of the Middle Ages; and must be deaf to those who, like the fox in Aesop that had lost its tail, proclaim the benefits of truncation. The range of knowledge and experience was then more

than in later times within the compass of a single mind and life. And so much that is necessary to a full understanding has been lost that no possible source of information should be shut out willingly. It is an exercise in humility to call up in all its details some scene of early English life (better a domestic scene than one of pageantry) and note how much is blurred.

Every blur is a challenge. There are few familiar subjects in which a beginner can sooner reach the limits of recorded knowledge. The great scholars have found time to chart only a fraction of their discoveries ; and the greatest could not hope or wish for a day when the number of quests worth the making would be appreciably less.

This book had its origin in a very different project. Professor Napier had asked me to join him in producing for the use of language students a volume of specimens from the Middle English dialects, with an apparatus strictly linguistic. The work had not advanced beyond the choice of texts when his death and my transfer to duties in which learning had no part brought it to an end. When later the call came for a book that would introduce newcomers to the fourteenth century, I was able to bring into the changed plan his favourite passage from *Sir Gawayne*, and to draw upon the notes of his lectures for its interpretation. It is a small part of my debt to the generous and modest scholar whose mastery of exact methods was an inspiration to his pupils.

I am obliged to the Early English Text Society and to the Clarendon Press for permission to use extracts from certain of their publications ; to the librarians who have made their manuscripts available, or have helped me to obtain facsimiles ; to Mr. J. R. R. Tolkien who has undertaken the preparation of the Glossary, the most exacting part of the apparatus ; and to Mr. Nichol Smith who has watched over the book from its beginnings.



## THE TEXTS

A SINGLE manuscript is chosen as the basis of each text, and neither its readings nor its spellings are altered if they can reasonably be defended. Where correction involves substitution, the substituted letters are printed in italics, and the actual reading of the manuscript will be found in the Footnotes (or occasionally in the Notes). Words or letters added to complete the manuscript are enclosed in caret brackets < >. Corrupt readings retained in the text are indicated by daggers ††. Paragraphing, punctuation, capitals, and the details of word division are modern, and contractions are expanded without notice, so that the reader shall not be distracted by difficulties that are purely palaeographical. A final *e* derived from OFr. *ē(e)* or *ie*, OE. *-ig*, is printed *ē*, to distinguish it from unaccented final *e* which is regularly lost in Modern English.

The extracts have been collated with the manuscripts, or with complete photographs, except Nos. iv (Thornton MS.), viii *b*, xi *a*, and xvii, the manuscripts of which I have not been able to consult. The foot-notes as a rule take no account of conjectural emendations, variants from other manuscripts, or minutiae like erasures and corrections contemporary with the copy.

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## I

ROBERT MANNYNG OF BRUNNE'S  
HANDLYNG SYNNE

A.D. 1303

What is known of Robert Mannyng of Brunne is derived from his own works. In the Prologue to *Handlyng Synne* he writes :

To alle Crystyn men vndir sunne,  
And to gode men of Brunne,  
And speciali, alle be name,  
þe felaushepe of Symprynghame,  
Roberd of Brunne greteþ ȝow  
In al godenesse þat may to prow ;  
Of Brunne wake yn Kesteuene,  
Syxe myle besyde Sympryngham euene,  
Y dwelled yn þe pryorye  
Fyftene ȝere yn cumpayne. . . .

And in the Introduction to his *Chronicle* :

Of Brunne I am ; if any me blame,  
Robert Mannyng is my name ;  
Blissed be he of God of heuene  
þat me Robert with gude wille neuene !  
In þe third Edwardes tyme was I,  
When I wrote alle þis story,  
In þe hous of Sixille I was a throwe ;  
Danȝ Robert of Malton, þat ȝe know,  
Did it wryte for felawes sake  
When þai wild solace make.

From these passages it appears that he was born in Brunne, the modern Bourn, in Lincolnshire ; and that he belonged to the Gilbertine Order. Sempringham was the head-quarters of the Order, and the dependent priory of Sixhill was near by. It has been suggested, without much evidence, that he was a lay brother, and not a full canon.

His *Chronicle of England* was completed in 1338. It falls into two parts, distinguished by a change of metre and source. The first, edited by Furnivall in the Rolls Series (2 vols. 1887), extends from the Flood to A.D. 689, and is based on Wace's *Brut*, the French source of Layamon's *Brut*. The second part, edited by Hearne, 2 vols., Oxford 1725, extends from A.D. 689 to the death of Edward I, and is based on the French *Chronicle* of a contemporary, who is sometimes called Pierre de Langtoft, sometimes Piers of Bridlington, because he was a native of Langtoft in Yorkshire, and a canon of the Austin priory at Bridlington in the same county. Mannyng's *Chronicle* has no great historical value, and its chief literary interest lies in the references to current traditions and popular stories.

*Handlyng Synne* is a much more valuable work. It was begun in 1303:

Dane Felyp was mayster þat tyme  
 Dat y began þys Englyssh ryme ;  
 þe ȝeres of grace fyl þan to be  
 A þousynd and þre hundred and þre.  
 In þat tyme turnede y þys  
 On Englyssh tungé out of Frankys  
 Of a boke as y fonde ynne,  
 Men clepyn þe boke 'Handlyng Synne'.

The source was again a French work written by a contemporary Northerner—William of Wadlington's *Manuel de Pecciez*. The popularity of such treatises on the Sins may be judged from the number of works modelled upon them: e. g. the *Ayenbyte of Inwyt*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. Their purpose was, as Robert explains, to enable a reader to examine his conscience systematically and constantly, and so to guard himself against vice.

Two complete MSS. of *Handlyng Synne* are known: British Museum MS. Harley 1701 (about 1350-75), and MS. Bodley 415, of a slightly later date. An important fragment is in the library of Dulwich College. The whole text, with the French source, has been edited by Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club, and later for the Early English Text Society. It treats, with the usual wealth of classification, of the Commandments, the Sins, the Sacraments, the Requisites and Graces of Shrift. But such

a bald summary gives no idea of the richness and variety of its content. For Mannyng, anticipating Gower, saw the opportunities that the illustrative stories offered to his special gifts, and spared no pains in their telling. A few examples are added from his own knowledge. More often he expands Waddington's outlines, as in the tale of the Dancers of Colbek. Here the French source is brief and colourless. But the English translator had found a fuller Latin version—clearly the same as that printed from Bodleian MS. Rawlinson C 938 in the preface to Furnivall's Roxburghe Club edition—and from it he produced the well-rounded and lively rendering given below.

Robert knew that a work designed to turn 'lewd men' from the ale-house to the contemplation of their sins must grip their attention; and in the art of linking good teaching with entertainment he is a master. He has the gift of conveying to his audience his own enjoyment of a good story. His loose-knit conversational style would stand the test of reading aloud to simple folk, and he allows no literary affectations, no forced metres or verbiage, to darken his meaning :

Haf I alle in myn Inglis layd  
 In symple speche as I couthe,  
 Pat is lightest in mannes mouthe.  
 I mad noght for no disours,  
 Ne for no seggers, no harpours,  
 But for þe luf of symple men  
 Pat strange Inglis can not ken;  
 For many it ere þat strange Inglis  
 In ryme wate neuer what it is,  
 And bot þai wist what it mente,  
 Ellis me thoght it were alle schente.

(*Chronicle*, ll. 72 ff.)

The simple form reflects the writer's frankness and directness. He points a moral fearlessly, but without harshness or self-righteousness. And the range of his sympathies and interests makes *Handlyng Synne* the best picture of English life before Langland and Chaucer.

## THE DANCERS OF COLBEK

MS. Harley 1701 (about A.D. 1375); ed. Furnivall, II. 8987 ff.

KAROLLES, wraslynges, or somour games, 1  
 Whoso euer haunteþ any swyche shames  
 Yn cherche, oþer yn chercheþerd,  
 Of sacrylage he may be aferd ;  
 Or entyrludes, or syngynge,  
 Or tabure bete, or oþer pypyng— 5  
 Alle swyche þyng forbodyn es  
 Whyle þe prest stondeþ at messe.  
 Alle swyche to euery gode preste ys lothe,  
 And sunner wyl he make hym wroth  
 þan he wyl, þat haþ no wyt,  
 Ne vndyrstondeþ nat Holy Wryt. 10  
 And specyal y at hygh tymes  
 Karolles to syng and rede rymys  
 Noght yn none holy stedes,  
 þat myȝt dysturble þe prestes bedes,  
 Or ȝyf he were yn orysun 15  
 Or any ouþer deuocyun :  
 Sacrylage ys alle hyt tolde,  
 þys and many oþer folde. 20  
 But for to leue yn cherche for to daunce,  
 Y shal ȝow telle a ful grete chaunce,  
 And y trow þe most þat fel  
 Ys soþe as y ȝow telle ;  
 And fyl þys chaunce yn þys londe, 25  
 Yn Ingland, as y vndyrstonde,  
 Yn a kynges tyme þat hyght Edward  
 Fyl þys chau(n)ce þat was so hard.

21 for (2nd) *om.* MS. Bodley 415. 24 Ys as soþ as þe gospel MS.  
*Bodley.*

Hyt was vpon a Crystemesse nyȝt  
 þat twelue folys a karolle dyȝt, 30  
 Yn wodehed, as hyt were yn cuntek,  
 þey come to a tounne men calle Colbek.  
 þe cherche of þe tounne þat þey to come  
 Ys of Seynt Magne, þat suffred martyrdome ;  
 Of Seynt Bokcestre hyt ys also, 35  
 Seynt Magnes suster, þat þey come to.  
 Here names of alle þus fonde y wryte,  
 And as y wote now shul ȝe wyte :  
 Here lodesman, þat made hem glew,  
 þus ys wryte, he hyȝte Gerlew. 40  
 Twey maydens were yn here coueyne,  
 Mayden Merswynde and Wybessyne.  
 Allc þese come þedyr for þat enchesone  
 Of þe prestes doghtyr of þe tounne.  
 þe prest hyȝt Robert, as y kan ame ; 45  
 Aȝone hyght hys sone by name ;  
 Hys doghter, þat þese men wulde haue,  
 þus ys wryte, þat she hyȝt Aue.  
 Echoune consented to o wyl  
 Who shuld go Aue oute to tyl, 50  
 þey graunted echone out to sende  
 Boȝe Wybessyne and Merswynde.  
 þese wommen ȝede and tolled here oute  
 Wyþ hem to karolle þe cherche aboute.  
 Beuune ordeyned here karollyng ; 55  
 Gerlew endyted what þey shuld syng.  
 þys ys þe karolle þat þey sunge,  
 As telleþ þe Latyn tunge :  
 ‘ *Equitabat Beuo per siluam frondosam,*  
*Ducebat secum Merswyndam formosam.* 60  
*Quid stamus ? cur non imus ?* ’  
 ‘ By þe leued wode rode Beuolyne,

Wyþ hym he ledde feyre Merswyne.  
 Why stonde we? why go we noght?'  
 þys ys þe karolle þat Grysly wroght; 65  
 þys songe sunge þey yn þe chercheþerd—  
 Of foly were þey no þyng aferd—  
 Vnto þe matynes were alle done.  
 And þe messe shuld bygynne sone.

þe preste hym reuest to begynne messe, 70  
 And þey ne left þerfore neuer þe lesse,  
 But daunsed furþe as þey bygan,  
 For alle þe messe þey ne blan.

þe preste, þat stode at þe autere,  
 And herd here noyse and here bere, 75  
 Fro þe auter down he nam,  
 And to þe cherche porche he cam,  
 And seyd 'On Goddes behalue, y ȝow forbede  
 þat ȝe no lenger do swych dede,  
 But comeþ yn on seyre manere 80  
 Goddes seruyse for to here,  
 And doþ at Crystyn mennys lawe;  
 Karolleþ no more, for Crystys awe!  
 Wurschyppeþ Hym with alle ȝoure myȝt  
 þat of þe Vrygyne was bore þys nyȝt.' 85

For alle hys byddyng lefste þey noȝt,  
 But daunsed furþ, as þey þoȝt.  
 þe preste þarefor was sore agreued;  
 He preyd God þat he on beleuyd,  
 And for Seynt Magne, þat he wulde so werche— 90  
 Yn whos wurschyp sette was þe cherche—  
 þat swych a veniaunce were on hem sent,  
 Are þey oute of þat stede were went,  
 þat 〈þey〉 myȝt euer ryȝt so wende

78 behalue] halfe MS. Bodley.  
 MS. Harley.

94 þey] so MS. Bodley: om.

Vnto þat tyme tweluemonth ende; 95  
 (Yn þe Latyne þat y fonde þore  
 He seyþ nat 'tweluemonth' but 'euermore';)  
 He cursed hem þere alsaume  
 As þey karoled on here gaume.

As sone as þe preste hadde so spoke 100  
 Euery hand yn ouþer so fast was loke  
 þat no man myȝt with no wundyr  
 þat tweluemo(n)þe parte hem asundyr.

þe preste ȝede yn, whan þys was done,  
 And commaunded•hys sone Aȝone 105  
 þat (he) shulde go swyþe astyr Aue,  
 Oute of þat karolle algate to haue.  
 But al to late þat wurde was seyd,  
 For on hem alle was þe veniaunce leyd.

Aȝone wende weyl for to spede; 110  
 Vnto þe karolle as swyþe he ȝede,  
 Hys systyr by þe arme he hente,  
 And þe arme fro þe body wente.  
 Men wundred alle þat þere wore,  
 And merueyle mowe ȝe here more, 115  
 For, seþen he had þe arme yn hand,  
 þe body ȝede surþ karoland,  
 And noþer (þe) body ne þe arme  
 Bledde neuer blode, colde ne warme,  
 But was as drye, with al þe haunche, 120  
 As of a stok were ryue a braunche.

Aȝone to hys fadyr went,  
 And broght hym a sory present:  
 'Loke, fadyr,' he seyd, 'and haue hyt here,  
 þe arme of þy doghtyr dere, 125  
 þat was myn owne syster Aue,  
 þat y wende y myȝt a saue.

By cursyng now sene hyt ys  
 Wyth veniaunce on þy owne flessh.  
 Fellyche þou cursedest, and ouer sone ;      130  
 þou askedest veniaunce,—þou hast þy bone.'  
 ȝow þar nat aske ȝyf þere was wo  
 Wyth þe preste, and wyth many mo.  
 þe prest, þat cursed for þat daunce,  
 On some of hys fyl harde chaunce.      135  
 He toke hys doghtyr arme forlorn  
 And byryed hyt on þe morn ;  
 þe nexte day þe arme of Aue  
 He fonde hyt lyggyng aboue þe graue.  
 He byryed (hyt) on anouþer day,      140  
 And eft aboue þe graue hyt lay.  
 þe þrydde tyme he byryed hyt,  
 And eft was hyt kast oute of þe pyt.  
 þe prest wulde byrye hyt no more,  
 He dredde þe veniaunce ferly sore ;      145  
 Ynto þe cherche he bare þe arme,  
 For dredre and doute of more harme,  
 He ordeyned hyt for to be  
 þat euery man myȝt wyth ye hyt se.  
 þese men þat ȝede so karolland,  
 Alle þat ȝere, hand yn hand,  
 þey neuer oute of þat stede ȝede,  
 Ne none myȝt hem þenne lede.  
 þere þe cursyng syrst bygan,  
 Yn þat place aboute þey ran,      150  
 þat neuer ne felte þey no werynes  
 As many þbodyes for goyng dost,  
 Ne mete ete, ne drank drynke,  
 Ne slepte onely alepy wynke.

136-7 forlorn . . . morñ MS.      140 hyt] so MS. Boaley : om. MS Harley.

Nyȝt ne day þey wyst of none, 160  
 Whan hyt was come, whan hyt was gone;  
 Frost ne snogh, hayle ne reyne,  
 Of colde ne hete, felte þey no peyne;  
 Heere ne nayles neuer grewe,  
 Ne solowed cloþes, ne turned hewe; 165  
 þundyr ne lyȝtning dyd hem no dere,  
 Goddys mercy ded hyt fro hem were;—  
 But sungge þat songge þat þe wo wroȝt:  
 'Why stonde we? why go we noȝt?'  
 What man shuld þyr be yn þys lyue 170  
 þat ne wilde hyt see and þedyr dryue?  
 þe Emperoure Henry come fro Rome  
 For to see þys hard dome.  
 Whan he hem say, he wepte sore  
 For þe myschefe þat he sagh þore. 175  
 He ded come wryȝtes for to make  
 Coueryng ouer hem, for tempest sake.  
 But þat þey wroght hyt was yn veyn,  
 For hyt come to no certeyn,  
 For þat þey sette on oo day 180  
 On þe touȝer downe hyt lay.  
 Ones, twyys, þryys, þus þey wroȝt,  
 And alle here makynge was for noȝt.  
 Myght no coueryng hyle hem fro colde  
 Tyl tyme of mercy þat Cryst hyt wolde. 185  
 Tyme of grace fyl þurgh Hys myȝt  
 At þe tweluemonth ende, on þe ȝole nyȝt.  
 þe same oure þat þe prest hem banned,  
 þe same oure atwynne þey twonede;  
 þat houre þat he cursed hem ynne, 190  
 þe same oure þey ȝede atwynne,  
 And as yn twynkelyng of an ye

Ynto þe cherche gun þey flye,  
And on þe pauement þey fyl alle downe  
As þey had be dede, or fal yn a swone. 195

þre days styl þey lay echone,  
þat none steryd oþer flesshe or bone,  
And at þe þre days ende  
To lyse God graunted hem to wende.  
þey sette hem vpp and spak apert 200  
To þe parysse prest, syre Robert:  
'þou art ensample and enchesun  
Of oure long confusyon;'  
þou maker art of oure trauayle,  
þat ys to many grete meruayle, 205  
And þy trauayle shalt þou sone ende,  
For to þy long home sone shalt þou wende.'

Alle þey ryse þat yche tyde  
But Aue,—she lay dede besyde.  
Grete sorowe had here fadyr, here broþer; 210  
Merueyle and drede had alle ouþer;  
Y trow no drede of soule dede,  
But with pyne was broght þe body dede.  
þe fyrist man was þe fadyr, þe prest,  
þat deyd astyr þe doȝtyr nest. 215

þys yche arme þat was of Aue,  
þat none myȝt leye yn graue,  
þe Emperoure dyd a vessel werche  
To do hyt yn, and hange yn þe cherche,  
þat alle men myȝt se hyt and knawe, 220  
And þenk on þe chaunce when men hyt sawe.

þese men þat hadde go þus karolland  
Alle þe ȝere, fast hand yn hand,  
þogh þat þey were þan asunder  
ȝyt alle þe worlde spake of hem wunder. 225

þat same hoppyng þat þey fyrst ȝede,  
 þat daunce ȝede þey þurgh land and lede,  
 And, as þey ne myȝt fyrst be vnbounde,  
 So este togedyr myȝt þey neuer be founde,  
 Ne myȝt þey neuer come ȝeyn  
 Togedyr to oo stede certeyn.

230

Foure ȝede to þe courte of Rome,  
 And euer hoppyng aboute þey nome,  
 †Wyth sundyr lepys† come þey þedyr,  
 But þey come neuer este togedyr.

235

Here cloþes ne roted, ne nayles grewe,  
 Ne heere ne wax, ne solowed hewe,  
 Ne neuer hadde þey amendement,  
 þat we herde, at any corseynt,  
 But at þe vyrgyne Seynt Edyght,  
 þere was he botened, Seynt Teodryght,  
 On oure Lady day, yn lenten tyde,  
 As he slepte here toumbe besyde.  
 þere he had hys medycyne  
 At Seynt Edyght, þe holy vyrgyne.

240

Brunyng þe bysshope of seynt Tolous  
 Wrote þys tale so merueylous ;  
 Seþþe was hys name of more renoun,  
 Men called hym þe pope Leoun.

þys at þe court of Rome þey wyte,  
 And yn þe kronykeles hyt ys wryte  
 Yn many stedys bezounde þe see,  
 More þan ys yn þys cuntré.

250

þarsor men seye, an weyl ys trowed,  
 'þe nere þe cherche, þe fyrþer fro God'.

255

So fare men here by þys tale,  
 Some holde hyt but a troteuale,

227 ȝede] wente *MS. Bodley*. 229 togedyr . . . neuer] myȝt þey  
 neuer togedyr *MS. Bodley*. 241 Seynt *om. MS. Bodley*.

Yn oþer stedys hyt ys ful dere  
And for grete merueyle þey wyl hyt here. 260  
A tale hyt **ys** of feyre shewyng,  
Ensample and drede **azens** cursyng.  
þys tale y tolde ȝow to <make> ȝow aferde  
Yn cherche to karolle, or yn cherchezerde,  
Namely **azens** þe prestys wylle :  
Leueþ whan he byddeþ ȝow be styll. 265

## II

### SIR ORFEO

*Sir Orfeo* is found in three MSS.: (1) the Auchinleck MS. (1325-1350), a famous Middle English miscellany now in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh; (2) British Museum MS. Harley 3810 (fifteenth century); (3) Bodleian MS. Ashmole 61 (fifteenth century). Our text follows the Auchinleck MS., with ll. 1-24 and ll. 33-46 supplied from the Harleian MS. The critical text of O. Zielke, Breslau 1880, reproduces the MSS. inaccurately.

The story appears to have been translated from a French source into South-Western English at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It belongs to a group of 'lays' which claim to derive from Brittany, e.g. *Lai le Freine*, which has the same opening lines (1-22); *Emaré*; and Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*.

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice was known to the Middle Ages chiefly from Ovid (*Metamorphoses* x) and from Virgil (*Georgics* iv). King Alfred's rendering of it in his *Boethius* is one of his best prose passages, despite the crude moralizing which makes Orpheus's backward glance at Eurydice before she is safe from Hades a symbol of the backslider's longing for his old sins. The Middle English poet has a lighter and daintier touch. The Greek myth is almost lost in a tale of fairyland, the earliest English romance of the kind; and to provide the appropriate happy ending, Sir Orfeo is made successful in his attempt to rescue Heurodis. The adaptation of the classical subject to a mediaeval setting is thorough. An amusing instance is the attempt in the Auchinleck MS. to give the poem an English interest by the unconvincing assurance that *Traciens* (which from 'Thracian' had come to mean 'Thrace') was the old name of Winchester (ll. 49-50). Probably we have in this MS. a copy of the rendering given by some minstrel at Winchester.

## II. SIR ORFEO

¶ We redyn ofte and fynde ywryte,  
 As clerkes don us to wyte,  
 The layes that ben of harpyng  
 Ben yfounde of frely thing.  
 Sum ben of wele, and sum of wo,  
 And sum of ioy and merthe also ;  
 Sum of trechery, and sum of gyle,  
 And sum of happes þat fallen by whyle ;  
 Sum of bourdys, and sum of rybaudry,  
 And sum þer ben of the seyré.  
 Of alle þing þat men may se,  
 Moost o loue forsoþe þey be.  
 In Brytayn þis layes arne ywryte,  
 Furst yfounde and forþe ygete,  
 Of aventures þat fillen by dayes,  
 Wheroft Brytouns made her layes.  
 When þey myght owher heryn  
 Of aventures þat þer weryn,  
 þey toke her harpys wiþ game,  
 Maden layes and ȝaf it name.

Of aventures þat han besalle  
 Y can sum telle, but nouȝt all.  
 Herken, lordyngys þat ben trewe,  
 And y wol ȝou telle of Sir Orphewe.)

Orfeo was a king,  
 In Inglond an heiȝe lording,  
 A stalworþ man and hardi bo,  
 Large and curteys he was also.  
 His fader was comen of King Pluto,  
 And his moder of King Juno,  
 þat sum time were as godes yhold,  
 For auentours þat þai dede and told.

ll. 1-24 from Harl. 3810 : om. MS. ll. 7-8 follow ll. 9-10 in  
 Harl. 12 o loue] to loue Harl. 26 In Inglond] And in his tyme Harl.

〈Orpheo most of ony þing  
 Louede þe gle of harpyng ;  
 Syker was euery gode harpoure  
 Of hym to haue moche honoure.      35  
 Hymself loued for to harpe,  
 And layde þeron his wittes scharpe.  
 He lernyd so, þer noþing was  
 A better harper in no plas ;  
 In þe world was neuer man born  
 þat euer Orpheo sat byforn,  
 And he myȝt of his harpyng here,  
 He schulde þinke þat he were  
 In one of þe ioys of Paradys,  
 Suche ioy and melody in his harpyng is.〉      40  
 45

ƿis king soiournd in Traciens,  
 ƿat was a cité of noble defens ;  
 For Winchester was cleped þo  
 Traciens wiþouten no.      50  
 ƿe king hadde a quen of priis,  
 ƿat was ycleped Dame Herodis,  
 ƿe fairest leuedi, for þe nones,  
 ƿat miȝt gon on bodi and bones,  
 Ful of loue and of godenis ;  
 55  
 Ac no man may telle hir fairnise.

Bifel so in þe comessing of May,  
 When miri and hot is þe day,  
 And oway beþ winter-schours,  
 And eueri feld is ful of flours,  
 And blosme breme on eueri bouȝ  
 65  
 Oueral wexeþ miri anouȝ  
 ƿis ich quen, Dame Heurodis,  
 Tok to maidens of priis,

33-46 from Harl. 3810 : om. MS.      49-50 om. Harl., Ashm.

51 [þe king] He Harl. : And Ashm.

And went in an vndrentide  
 To play bi an orchard side,  
 To se þe floures sprede and spring.  
 And to here þe soules sing.

þai sett hem doun al þre  
 Vnder a fair ympe-tre,  
 And wel sone þis fair quene  
 Fel on slepe opon þe grene.  
 þe maidens durst hir nouȝt awake,  
 Bot lete hir ligge and rest take.

So sche slepe til afternone,  
 þat vndertide was al ydone.  
 Ac as sone as sche gan awake,  
 Sche crid and loþli bere gan make,  
 Sche froted hir honden and hir fet,  
 And crached hir visage, it bled wete ;  
 Hir riche robe hye al torett,  
 And was reuey(se)d out of hir witt.

þe two maidens hir biside  
 No durst wiþ hir no leng abide,  
 Bot ourn to þe palays ful riȝt,  
 And told boþe squier and kniȝt  
 þat her quen awede wold,  
 And bad hem go and hir athold.  
 Kniȝtes vrn, and leuedis also,  
 Damisels sexti and mo,

In þe orchard to þe quen hye come,  
 And her vp in her armes nome,  
 And brouȝt hir to bed atte last,  
 And held hir þere fine fast ;  
 Ac euer sche held in o cri,  
 And wold vp and owy.

When Orfeo herd þat tiding,

Neuer him nas wers for no þing.

He come wiþ kniȝtes tene

To chaumber riȝt bifor þe quene,

And biheld, and seyd wiþ grete pitē:

‘O lef liif, what is te,

þat euer ȝete hast ben so stille,

And now gredest wonder schille?

þi bodi, þat was so white ycore,

Wiþ þine nailes is al totore.

Allas! þi rode, þat was so red,

Is al wan as þou were ded;

And also þine fingres smale

Beþ al blodi and al pale.

Allas! þi louesom eyȝen to

Lokeþ so man doþ on his fo.

A! dame, ich biseche merci.

Lete ben al þis reweful cri,

And tel me what þe is, and hou,

And what þing may þe help now.’

þo lay sche stille atte last,

And gan to wepe swiþe fast,

And seyd þus þe king to:

‘Allas! mi lord, Sir Orfeo,

Seþþen we first togider were,

Ones wroþ neuer we nere,

Bot euer ich haue yloued þe

As mi liif, and so þou me.

Ac now we mot delen ato;

Do þi best, for y mot go.’

‘Allas!’ quaþ he, ‘forlorn icham.

Whider wiltow go, and to wham?

Whider þou gost, ichil wiþ þe,

And whider y go, þou schalt wiþ me.’

‘Nay, nay, sir, þat nouȝt nis;

100

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130

Ichil þe telle al hou it is :  
 As ich lay þis vndertide,  
 And slepe vnder our orchard-side,  
 þer come to me to fair kniȝtes      135  
 Wele y-armed al to riȝtes,  
 And bad me comen an heiȝing,  
 And speke wiþ her lord þe king.  
 And ich answerd at wordes bold,  
 Y durst nouȝt, no y nold.      140  
 þai priked oȝain as þai miȝt drieue ;  
 þo com her king also blȝue,  
 Wiþ an hundred kniȝtes and mo,  
 And damisels an hundred also,  
 Al on snowe-white stedes ;      145  
 As white as milke were her wedes :  
 Y no seiȝe neuer ȝete biseore  
 So fair creatours ycore.  
 þe king hadde a croun on hed,  
 It nas of siluer, no of gold red,      150  
 Ac it was of a precious ston,  
 As briȝt as þe sonne it schon.  
 And as son as he to me cam,  
 Wold ich, nold ich, he me nam,  
 And made me wiþ him ride      155  
 Opon a palfray, bi his side,  
 And brouȝt me to his palays,  
 Wele atird in ich ways,  
 And schewed me castels and tours,  
 Riuers, forestes, friþ wiþ flours,      160  
 And his riche stedes ichon ;  
 And seþþen me brouȝt oȝain hom  
 Into our owhen orchard,  
 And said to me þus afterward :  
 “ Loke, dame, to-morwe þatow be      165

Riȝt here vnder þis ympe-tre,  
 And þan þou schalt wiþ ous go,  
 And liue wiþ ous euermo ;  
 And ȝif þou makest ous ylet,  
 Whar þou be, þou worst yset,  
 And totore þine limes al,  
 þat noþing help þe no schal ;  
 And þei þou best so totorn,  
 ȝete þou worst wiþ ous yborn.”

170

When King Orfeo herd þis cas,  
 ‘O we !’ quaþ he, ‘allas, allas !  
 Leuer me were to lete mi liif,  
 þan þus to lese þe quen mi wiif !’  
 He asked conseyl at ich man,  
 Ac no man him help no can.

175

180

Amorwe þe vndertide is come,  
 And Orfeo haþ his armes ynome,  
 And wele ten hundred kniȝtes wiþ him  
 Ich y-armed stout and grim ;  
 And wiþ þe quen wenten he

185

Riȝt vnto þat ympe-tre.  
 þai made scheltrom in ich a side,  
 And sayd þai wold þere abide,  
 And dye þer euerichon,  
 Er þe quen schuld fram hem gon.

190

Ac ȝete amiddes hem ful riȝt  
 þe quen was oway ytuiȝt,  
 Wiþ fairi forþ ynome ;  
 Men wist neuer wher sche was bicome.

þo was þer criing, wepe and wo.  
 þe king into his chaumber is go,  
 And oft swoned opon þe ston,  
 And made swiche diol and swiche mon  
 þat neȝe his liif was yspent :

195

þer was non amendment.

200

He cleped togider his barouns,  
Erls, lordes of renouns;  
And when þai al ycomen were,  
'Lordinges,' he said, 'bisor ȝou here  
Ich ordainy min heȝe steward  
To wite mi kingdom afterward;  
In mi stede ben he schal,  
To kepe mi londes ouer al.  
For, now ichaue mi quen ylore,  
þe fairest leuedi þat euer was bore,  
Neuer est y nil no woman se.  
Into wildernes ichil te,  
And liue þer euermore  
Wiþ wilde bestes in holtes hore.  
And when ȝe vnderstond þat y be spent,  
Make ȝou þan a parlement,  
And chese ȝou a newe king.  
Now doþ ȝour best wiþ al mi þing.'

þo was þer wepeing in þe halle,  
And grete cri among hem alle;  
Vnneþe miȝt old or ȝong  
For wepeing speke a word wiþ tong.  
þai kneled adoun al yfere,  
And praid him, ȝif his wille were,  
þat he no schuld nouȝt fram hem go.  
'Do way l' quaþ he, 'it schal be so.'

Al his kingdom he forsoke;  
Bot a sclauin on him he toke;  
He no hadde kirtel no hode,  
Schert, *(no)* no noþer gode.  
Bot his harp he tok algate,  
And dede him barfot out atte ȝate;

205

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230

No man most wiþ him go.

O way! what þer was wepe and wo,  
When he, þat hadde ben king wiþ croun,  
Went so pouerlich out of toun!

þurch wode and ouer heþ  
Into þe wildernes he geþ.

Noþing he fint þat him is ays,  
Bot euer he liueþ in gret malais.

He þat hadde ywerd þe fowe and griis,  
And on bed þe purper biis,  
Now on hard heþe he liþ,  
Wiþ leues and gresse he him wriþ.

I-He þat hadde had castels and tours,  
Riuers, forest, friþ wiþ flours,  
Now, þei it comenci to snewe and frese,  
Þis king mot make his bed in mese.

He þat had yhad kniȝtes of priis  
Bifor him kneland, and leuedis,  
Now seþ he noþing þat him likeþ,  
Bot wilde wormes bi him strikeþ.

He þat had yhad plente  
Of mete and drink, of ich deynté,  
Now may he al day digge and wrote  
Er he finde his fille of rote.

In somer he liueþ bi wild frut  
And berien bot gode lite;  
In winter may he noþing finde  
Bot rote, grases, and þe rinde.

Al his bodi was oway duine  
For missays, and al tochine.  
Lord! who may telle þe sore  
Þis king sufferd ten ȝere and more?  
His here of his berd, blac and rowe,  
To his girdelstede was growe.

235

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265

## II. SIR ORFEO

His harp, whereon was al his gle,  
 He hidde in an holwe tre;  
 And, when þe weder was clere and briȝt,  
 He toke his harp to him wel riȝt,  
 And harped at his owhen wille. 270  
 Into alle þe wode þe soun gan schille,  
 þat alle þe wilde bestes þat þer beþ  
 For ſoie abouten him þai teþ;  
 And alle þe foules þat þer were 275  
 Come and ſete on ich a brere,  
 To here his harping aſiȝe,  
 So miche melody was þerin;  
 And when he his harping lete wold,  
 No best bi him abide nold. 280

He miȝt ſe him bisides  
 Oft in hot vndertides  
 þe king o fairy wiþ his rout  
 Com to hunt him al about,  
 Wiþ dim cri and blowcing; 285  
 And houndes also wiþ him berking;  
 Ac no best þai no nome,  
 No neuer he nift whider þai bicome.  
 And oþer while he miȝt him ſe  
 As a gret ost bi him te 290  
 Wele atourned ten hundred kniȝtes,  
 Ich y-armed to his riȝtes,  
 Of cuntenaunce stout and fers,  
 Wiþ mani desplaid baners,  
 And ich his ſword ydrawe hold, 295  
 Ac neuer he nift whider þai wold.  
 And oþer while he ſeize oþer þing:  
 Kniȝtes and leuedis com daunceing  
 In queynt atire, gisely,  
 Queynt pas and softly; 300

Tabours and trunpes ȝede hem bi,  
And al maner menstraci.

And on a day he seiȝe him biside  
Sexti leuedis on hors ride,  
Gentil and iolif as brid on ris,—  
Nouȝt o man amonges hem þer nis.  
And ich a faucoun on hond bere,  
And ride[n] on haukin bi o riuere.  
Of game þai founde wel gode haunt,  
Maulardes, hayroun, and cormeraunt ;  
þe foules of þe water ariseþ,  
þe faucouns hem wele deuiseþ ;  
Ich faucoun his pray slouȝ.

þat seiȝe Orfeo, and louȝ :  
'Parfay !' quaþ he, 'þer is fair game,  
þider ichil, bi Godes name !  
Ich was ywon swiche werk to se.'

He aros, and þider gan te.  
To a leuedi he was ycome,  
Biheld, and haþ wele vndername,  
And seþ bi al þing þat it is  
His owhen quen, Dam Heurodis.

ȝern he biheld hir, and sche him eke,  
Ac noþer to oþer a word no speke.  
For messais þat sche on him seiȝe,  
þat had ben so riche and so heiȝe,  
þe teres fel out of her eiȝe.

þe oþer leuedis þis yseiȝe,  
And maked hir oway to ride,  
Sche most wiþ him no lenger abide.

'Allas !' quaþ he, 'now me is wo.  
Whi nil deþ now me slo ?  
Allas ! wreche, þat y no miȝt

305

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330

## II. SIR ORFEO

Dye now after þis siȝt!

Allas! to long last mi liif,

335

When y no dar nouȝt wiþ mi wiif,

No lyfe to me, o word speke.

Allas! whi nil min hert breke?

Parfay! quap he, 'tide wat bitide,

Whider so þis leuedis ride,

340

þe selue way ichil streche;

Of liif no deþ me no reche.'

His sclauain he dede on also spac,

And henge his harp opon his bac,

And had wel gode wil to gon,—

345

He no spard noiþer stub no ston.

In at a roche þe leuedis rideþ,

And he after, and nouȝt abideþ.

When he was in þe roche ygo

Wele þre mile oþer mo,

350

He com into a fair cuntray,

As briȝt so sonne on somers day,

Smoþe and plain and al grene,

Hille no dale nas þer non ysene.

Amidde þe lond a castel he siȝe,

355

Riche and real, and wonder heize.

Al þe vrimast wal

Was clere and schine as cristal;

An hundred tours þer were about,

Degiselich, and bataild stout;

360

þe butras com out of þe diche,

Of rede gold y-arched riche;

þe vousour was anow<rn>ed al

Of ich maner diuers animal.

Wipin þer wer wide wones

365

Al of precious stones.

þe werst piler on to biholde

Was al of burnist gold.  
 Al þat lond was euer liȝt,  
 For when it schuld be þerk and niȝt, 370  
 þe riche stones liȝt gonne,  
 As briȝt as doþ at none þe sonne.  
 No man may telle, no þenche in þouȝt,  
 þe riche werk þat þer was wrouȝt;  
 Bi al þing him þink þat it is  
 þe proude court of Paradis. 375

In þis castel þe leuedis aliȝt;  
 He wold in after, ȝif he miȝt.  
 Orfeo knokkeþ atte gate,  
 þe porter was redi þerate, 380  
 And asked what he wold haue ydo.  
 'Parfay!' quaþ he, 'icham a minstrel, lo!  
 To solas þi lord wiþ mi gle,  
 ȝif his swete wille be.'  
 þe porter vndede þe ȝate anon, 385  
 And lete him into þe castel gon.

þan he gan bihold about al,  
 And seiȝe þsult liggeand wiþin þe wal  
 Of folk þat were þider ybrouȝt,  
 And þouȝt dede, and nare nouȝt. 390

Sum stode wiþouten hade,  
 And sum non armes nade,  
 And sum þurch þe bodi hadde wounde,  
 And sum lay wode, ybounde,  
 And sum armed on hors sete, 395  
 And sum astrangled as þai ete,  
 And sum were in water adreynt,  
 And sum wiþ fire al forschreynt;  
 Wiues þer lay on childbedde,  
 Sum ded, and sum awedde; 400  
 And wonder fele þer lay bisides,

Rijt as þai slepe her vndertides.  
 Eche was þus in þis warld ynome,  
 Wiþ fairi þider ycome.

þer he seiȝe his owhen wiȝf, 405  
 Dame Heurodis, his lȝf liȝf,  
 Slepe vnder an ympe-tre :  
 Bi her cloþes he knewe þat it was he.

And when he hadde bihold þis meruails alle,  
 He went into þe kinges halle. 410

þan seiȝe he þer a semly siȝt,  
 A tabernacle blisful and briȝt,  
 þerin her maister king sete,  
 And her quen fair and swete.

Her crounes, her cloþes, schine so briȝt, 415  
 þat vnneþe bihold he hem miȝt.

When he hadde biholden al þat þing,  
 He kneled adoun bisor þe king.

‘O lord,’ he seyd, ‘ȝif it þi wille were,  
 Mi menstraci þou schust yhere.’ 420

þe king answerd: ‘What man artow,  
 þat art hider ycomen now?

Ich, no non þat is wiþ me,  
 No sent neuer after þe;

Seþþen þat ich here regni gan, 425  
 Y no fond neuer so folchardi man

þat hider to ous durst wende,  
 Bot þat ichim wald ofsende.’

‘Lord,’ quaþ he, ‘trowe ful wel,  
 Y nam bot a pouer menstrel;

And, sir, it is þe maner of ous  
 To seche mani a lordes hous;

þei we nouȝt welcom no be,  
 ȝete we mot proferi forþ our gle.’

Bifor þe king he sat adoun, 435  
 And tok his harp so miri of soun,  
 And tempreþ his harp, as he wele can,  
 And blissful notes he þer gan,  
 þat al þat in þe palays were  
 Com to him for to here, 440  
 And liggeþ adoun to his fete,  
 Hem þenkeþ his melody so swete.  
 þe king herkneþ and sitt ful stille,  
 To here his gle he haþ gode wille ;  
 Gode bourde he haddde of his gle, 445  
 þe riche quen also hadde he.  
 When he hadde stint his harping,  
 þan seyd to him þe king :  
 'Menstrel, me likeþ wele þi gle.  
 Now aske of me what it be, 450  
 Largelich ichil þe pay.  
 Now speke, and tow miȝt asay.'  
 'Sir,' he seyd, 'ich biseche þe  
 þatow woldest ȝiue me  
 þat ich leuedi, briȝt on ble,  
 þat slepeþ vnder þe ympe-tre.' 455  
 'Nay,' quaþ þe king, 'þat nouȝt nere !  
 A sori couple of ȝou it were,  
 For þou art lene, rowe, and blac,  
 And sche is louesum, wiþouten lac ; 460  
 A loþlich þing it were forþi  
 To sen hir in þi compayni.'  
 'O sir,' he seyd, 'gentil king,  
 ȝete were it a wele fouler þing  
 To here a lesing of þi mouȝe, 465  
 So, sir, as ȝe seyd nouȝe,  
 What ich wold aski, haue y schold,  
 And nedes þou most þi word hold '

þe king seyd: 'Seþben it is so,  
Take hir bi þe hond, and go;  
Of hir ichil þatow be bliþe.'

470

He kneled adoun, and þonked him swiþe;  
His wiif he tok bi þe hond,  
And dede him swiþe out of þat lond,  
And went him out of þat þede,—  
Riȝt as he come þe way he ȝede.

475

So long he haþ þe way ynome,  
To Winchester he is ycome,  
þat was his owhen cité;  
Ac no man knewe þat it was he.

480

No forþer þan þe tounes ende  
For knoweleche *(he)* no durst wende,  
Bot wiþ a begger y*(n)* bilt ful narwe,  
þer he tok his herbarwe,

To him and to his owhen wiif,

485

As a minstrel of pouer liif,  
And asked tidinges of þat lond,  
And who þe kingdom held in hond.

þe pouer begger in his cote

490

Told him euerich à grot:

Hou her quen was stole owy

Ten ȝer gon wiþ fairy;

And hou her king en exile ȝede,

Bot no man nist in wiche þede;

And hou þe steward þe lond gan hold;

495

And oþer mani þinges him told.

Amorwe, oȝain nonetide,

He maked his wiif þer abide;

þe beggers cloþes he borwed anon,

500

And heng his harp his rigge opon,

And went him into þat cité,

þat men miȝt him bihold and se.  
 Erls and barouns bold,  
 Buriays and leuedis him gun bihold.  
 'Lo,' þai seyd, 'swiche a man!  
 Hou long þe here hongeþ him opan!  
 Lo, hou his berd hongeþ to his kne!  
 He is yclongen also a tre!'

505

And as he ȝede in þe strete,  
 Wiþ his steward he gan mete,  
 And loude he sett on him a crie:  
 'Sir steward,' he seyd, 'merci!  
 Icham an harpour of heþenisse;  
 Help me now in þis destresse!  
 þe steward seyd: 'Com wiþ me, come;  
 Of þat ichaue þou schalt haue some.  
 Euerich gode harpour is welcom me to,  
 For mi lordes loue Sir Orfeo.'

510

515

In þe castel þe steward sat atte mete,  
 And mani lording was bi him sete.  
 þer were trompour(s) and tabourers,  
 Harpours fele, and crounders.  
 Miche melody þai maked alle,  
 And Orfeo sat stille in þe halle,  
 And herkneþ. When þai ben al stille,  
 He toke his harp and tempred schille,  
 þe bli(sse)fulest notes he harped þere  
 þat euer ani man yherd wiþ ere;  
 Ich man liked wele his gle.

520

525

þe steward biheld and gan yse,  
 And knewe þe harp als bluie.  
 'Menstrel,' he seyd, 'so mot þou þriue,  
 Where hadestow þis harp, and hou?  
 Y pray þat þou me telle now.'  
 'Lord,' quaþ he, 'in vncouþe ȝede,

530

535

## II. SIR ORFEO

Purch a wildernes as y ȝede,  
 Per y founde in a dale  
 Wiþ lyouns a man totorn smale,  
 And wolues him frete wiþ teþ so scharp.  
 Bi him y fond þis ich harp ;  
 Wele ten ȝere it is ygo.'

'O,' quaþ þe steward, 'now me is wo !  
 þat was mi lord Sir Orfeo.

Allas ! wreche, what schal y do,  
 þat haue swiche a lord ylore ?  
 A way ! þat ich was yþore !

þat him was so hard grace yȝarked,  
 And so vile deþ ymarked !'  
 Adoun he fel aswon to grounde.  
 His barouns him tok vp in þat stounde,  
 And telleþ him hou it geþ—  
 It nis no bot of manes deþ.

King Orfeo knewe wele bi þan  
 His steward was a trewe man

And loued him as he auȝt to do,  
 And stont vp and seyt þus : 'Lo,  
 Steward, herkne now þis þing :  
 ȝif ich were Orfeo þe king,

And hadde ysuffred ful ȝore  
 In wildernisse miche sore,  
 And hadde ywon mi quen owy  
 Out of þe lond of fairy,  
 And hadde ybrouȝt þe leuedi hende  
 Riȝt here to þe tounes ende,

And wiþ a begger her in ynome,  
 And were myself hider ycome  
 Pouterlich to þe, þus stille,  
 For to asay þi gode wille,  
 And ich founde þe þus trewe,  
 þou no schust it neuer rewe :

540

545

550

555

560

565

570

Sikerlich, for loue or ay,  
 þou schust be king after mi day.  
 And ȝif þou of mi deþ hadest ben bliþe,  
 þou schuþt haue voided also swiþe.'

þo al þo þat þerin sete 575

þat it was King Orfeo vnderȝete,

And þe steward him wele knewe;

Ouer and ouer þe bord he þrewe,

And fel adoun to his fet;

So dede euerich lord þat þer sete,

And al þai seyd at, o criing: 580

'ȝe beþ our lord, sir, and our king!'

Glad þai were of his liue.

To chaumber þai ladde him als biliue,

And baþed him, and schaued his berd, 585

And tired him as a king apert.

And seþþen wiþ gret processioun

þai brouȝt þe quen into þe toun,

Wiþ al maner menstraci.

Lord! þer was grete melody!

For ioie þai wepe wiþ her eȝe

þat hem so sounde ycomen seiȝe.

Now King Orfeo newe coround is,

And his quen Dame Heuropis,

And liued long afterward;

And seþþen was king þe steward. 595

Harpours in Bretaine after þan

Herd hou þis meruaile bigan,

And made herof a lay of gode likeing,

And nempned it after þe king;

þat lay 'Orfeo' is yhote,

Gode is þe lay, swete is þe note.

þus com Sir Orfeo out of his care.

God graunt ous alle wele to fare.

### III

## MICHAEL OF NORTHGATE'S AYENBYTE OF INWYT

A.D. 1340.

Michael of Northgate was a monk of St. Augustine's, Canterbury. From a library catalogue of the monastery it appears that he was a lover of books, for he is named as the donor of twenty-five MSS., a considerable collection for those days. Their titles show a taste not merely for religious works, but for science—mathematics, chemistry, medicine, as they were known at the time. Four of these MSS. have been traced, and one of them, British Museum MS. Arundel 57, is Michael's autograph copy of the *Ayenbyte*. On folio 2 of the MS. are the words: *¶is boc is Dun Michelis of Northgate, ywritte an Englis of his ozene hand, ¶et batte 'Ayenbyte of Inwyt'; and is of the boc-house of Saynt Austines of Canterberi, mid he lettres .CC.* 'CC.' is the press-mark given in the catalogue. A note at the end of the text shows that it was finished on October 27, 1340:

*Ymende þet þis boc is uolued ine þe eue of þe holy apostles Symon an Iudas [i.e. Oct. 27] of ane broþer of the cloystre of Sauynt Austin of Canterberi, in the yeare of oure Lhordes beringe 1340.*

The *Ayenbyte* has been edited for the Early English Text Society by R. Morris. The title means literally 'Remorse of Conscience', but from the contents of the work it would appear that the writer meant rather 'Stimulus to the Conscience', or 'Prick of Conscience'. It is in fact a translation from the French *Somme des Vices et des Vertues*, compiled by Friar Lorens in 1279 for King Philip le Hardi, and long held to be the main source of Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. Caxton rendered the *Somme* into English prose as *The Royal Book*. It treats of the Commandments, the Creed, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Petitions of the Paternoster, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Dan Michael's purpose is stated in some doggerel lines at the end:

Nou ich wille þet ye ywyte  
 Hou hit is ywent  
 Þet þis boc is ywritte  
 Mid Engliss of Kent.  
 Þis boc is ymad uor lewede men,  
 Vor uader, and uor moder, and uor oþer ken,  
 Ham uor to berȝe uram alle manyere zen,  
 Þet ine hare inwytte ne bleue no uoul wen.

His translation is inaccurate, and sometimes unintelligible, and the treatment is so barren of interest that the work seems to have fallen flat even in its own day, when the popular appetite for edification was keen and unspoiled. But if its literary merit is slight, linguistically it is one of the most important works in Middle English. It provides a long prose text, exactly dated and exactly localized; we have the author's autograph copy to work from; and the dialect is well distinguished. These circumstances, unique in Middle English, make it possible to study the Kentish dialect of the mid-fourteenth century under ideal conditions.

#### HOW MERCY INCREASES TEMPORAL GOODS.

Hou Merci multiplieþ þe timliche guodes, hyerof we habbeþ uele uayre uorbisnen, huerof ich wille hier zome telle. Me ret of Saint Germain of Aucerre þet, þo he com uram Rome, ate outguoinge of Melane, he acsede at onen of his diaknen yef he hedde eny zeluer, and he ansuerede þet 5 he ne hedde bote þri pans, uor Say(n)t Germayn hit hedde al yeue to pouren. Þanne he him het þet he his ssoldie yeue to þe poure, uor God hedde ynoȝ of guode, huerof he hise uedde uor þane day. Þe dyacne mid greate pine and mid greate grochinge yeaf þe tuaye pans, and oþhild þane þridde. Þe 10 sergont of ane riche kniȝte him broȝte ane his lhordes haf tuo hundred pans. Þo clepede he his dyacne, and him zede þet he hedde benome þe poure ane peny, and yef he hedde yeue þane þridde peny to þe poure, þe kniȝt him hedde yzant þri hondred pans.

Esterward me ret ine þe lyue of Ion þe Amoner, þet wes  
 zuo ycleped uor þe greate elmesses þet he dede: A riche  
 ientilman wes yrobbed of þieues, zuo þet him naȝt ne blefte.  
 He him com to playni to þe uorzede manne, and he him  
 20 zede his cas. He hedde greate reuþe þerof, and het his  
 desspendoure þet he him yeave uyftene pond of gold. Þe  
 spendere, be his couaytise, ne yeaf bote vys. An haste a  
 gentil wymman wodewe zente to þe uore-ȝyzedre Ion uif  
 hondred pond of gold. Þo he clepede his spendere, and him  
 25 acsede hou moche he hedde yyeue to þe kniȝte. He ansuerede  
 'vyftene pond.' Þe holy man ansuerede þet 'nay, he ne  
 hedde bote vys'; and huanne he hit wiste þe ilke zelue þet  
 his hedde onderuonge, zuo zayde to his spendere þet yef he  
 hedde yyeue þe viftene pond þet he hedde yhote, oure Lhord  
 30 him hede yzent be þe guode wysman a þouzond and vys  
 hondred pond. And huanne he acsede ate guode wysman,  
 þo he hedde hise ycleped, hou moche hi hedde him ylete, hi  
 andzuerede þet uerst hi hedde ywrite ine hare testament þet  
 hi him let a þousend and vys hondred pond. Ac hi lokede  
 35 esterward ine hare testament, and hi yzeȝ þe þousend pond  
 defaced of hire write, and zuo ylefde þe guode wysman þet  
 God wolde þet hi ne zente bote vif hondred.

Esterward Saint Gregori telþ þet Saint Boniface uram þet  
 he wes child he wes zuo piteous þet he yaf ofte his kertel  
 40 and his sserte to þe poure uor God, þaz his moder him byete  
 ofte þeruore. Þanne bevil þet þet child yzeȝ manie poure þet  
 hedden mezeyse. He aspide þet his moder nes naȝt þer.  
 An haste he yarn to þe gerniere, and al þet his moder hedde  
 ygadered uor to pasi þet yer he hit yaf þe poure. And þo  
 45 his moder com, and wyste þe ilke dede, hy wes al out of hare  
 wytte. Þet child bed oure Lhorde, and þet gernier wes an  
 haste al uol.

Esterward þer wes a poure man, ase me zayþ, þet hedde  
 ane cou; and yhyerde zigge of his preste ino his prechinge

þet God zede ine his spelle þet God wolde yelde an hondred- 50  
uald al þet me yeave uor him. Þe guode man, mid þe rede  
of his wyue, yeaf his cou to his preste, þet wes riche. Þe  
prest his nom bleþeliche, and hise zente to þe oþren þet he  
hedde. Þo hit com to euen, þe guode mannes cou com hom  
to his house ase hi wes ywoned, and ledde mid hare alle þe 55  
prestes ken, al to an hondred. Þo þe guode man yzeȝ þet,  
he þoȝte þet þet wes þet word of þe Godspelle þet he hedde  
yyolde; and him hi weren ylocked beuore his bisshoppe aye  
þane prest. Þise uorbisne sseweȝ wel þet merci is guod  
chapuare, uor hi deȝ wexe þe timliche guodes. 60

## IV

### RICHARD ROLLE OF HAMPOLE

D. 1349.

Richard Rolle was born at Thornton-le-Dale, near Pickering, in Yorkshire. He was sent to Oxford, already a formidable rival to the University of Paris; but the severer studies were evidently uncongenial to his impulsive temperament. He returned home without taking orders, improvised for himself a hermit's dress, and fled into solitude. His piety attracted the favour of Sir John and Lady Dalton, who gave him a cell on their estate. Here, in meditation, he developed his mystical religion. He did not immure himself, or cut himself off from human companionship. For a time he lived near Anderby, where was the cell of the recluse Margaret Kirkby, to whom he addressed his *Form of Perfect Living*. Another important work, *Ego Dormio et Cor Meum Vigilat*, was written for a nun of Yedingham (Yorks.). Towards the end of his life he lived in close friendship with the nuns of H ample, and for one of them he wrote his *Commandment of Love to God*. At H ample he died in 1349, the year of the Black Death. By the devout he was regarded as a saint, and had his commemoration day, his office, and his miracles; but he was never canonized.

He wrote both in Latin and in English, and it is not always easy to distinguish his work from that of his many followers and imitators. The writings attributed to him are edited by C. Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, 2 vols., London 1895-6. Besides the prose works noted above, he wrote, at the request of Margaret Kirkby, a *Commentary on the Psalms* (ed. Bramley, Oxford 1884), based on the Latin of Peter Lombard. A long didactic poem in Northern English, the *Prick of Conscience*, has been attributed to

him from Lydgate's time onwards ; but his authorship has recently been questioned, chiefly on the ground that the poem is without a spark of inspiration. It is not certain that he wrote *Love is Life*, which is included here because it expresses in characteristic language his central belief in the personal bond, the burning love, between God and man. The first prose selection shows that he did not disdain the examples from natural history that were so popular in the sermons of the time. The second is chapter xi of the *Form of Perfect Living*, which is found as a separate extract from an early date.

With Rolle began a movement of devotional piety, which, as might be expected from its strong appeal to the emotions, was taken up first among religious women ; and signs of a striving for effect in his style suggest that the hermit was not indifferent to the admiration of his followers. He brings to his teaching more heart than mind. He escapes the problems of the world, which seemed so insistent to his contemporaries, by denying the world's claims. His ideas and temperament are diametrically opposed to those of the other great figure in the religious life of fourteenth-century England—Wyclif, the schoolman, politician, reformer, controversialist. Yet they have in common a sincerity and directness of belief that brushes aside conventions, and an enthusiasm that made them leaders in an age when the Church as a whole suffered from apathy.

#### A. LOVE IS LIFE.

Cambridge University Library MS. DD. 5. 64, III (about 1400) f. 38 a.

(L)ur es lyf þat lastes ay, þar it in Criste es feste,  
For wele ne wa it chaunge may, als wryten has men wyseste.  
þe nyght it tournes intil þe day, þi trauel intyll reste;  
If þou wil luf þus as I say, þou may be wyth þe beste.

Lufe es thoght wyth grete desyre of a fayre louyng;      5  
Lufe I lyken til a fyre þat sloken may na thyng;  
Lufe vs clenses of oure syn; luf vs bote soll bryng;  
Lufe þe Keynges hert may wyn; lufe of ioy may syng.

þe settel of lufe es lyft hee, for intil heuen it ranne ;  
 Me thynk in erth it es sle, þat makes men pale and wanne ; 10  
 þe bede of blysse it gase ful nee, I tel þe as I kanne :  
 þof vs thynk þe way be dregh, luf copuls God and manne.  
 Lufe es hatter þen þe cole ; lufe may nane beswyke.  
 þe flawme of lufe wha myght it thole, if it war ay ilyke ? 14  
 Luf vs comfortes, and mase in quart, and lystes tyl heuenryke ;  
 Luf rausches Cryste intyl owr hert ; I wate na lust it lyke.  
 Lere to luf, if þou wyl lyfe when þou sall hethen fare ;  
 All þi thoght til Hym þou gyf þat may þe kepe fra kare :  
 Loke þi hert fra Hym noght twyn, if þou in wandreth ware ;  
 Sa þou may Hym welde and wyn, and luf Hym euermare. 20  
 Iesu, þat me lyfe hase lent, intil þi lufe me bryng !  
 Take til þe al myne entent, þat þow be my þhernyng.  
 Wa fra me away war went, and comne war my couaylyng,  
 If þat my sawle had herd and hent þe sang of þi louyng.  
 þi lufe es ay lastand, fra þat we may it fele ; 25  
 þarein make me byrnand, þat na thyng gar it kele.  
 My thoght take into þi hand, and stabyl it ylk a dele,  
 þat I be noght heldand to luf þis worldes wele.  
 If I lufe any erthly thyng þat payes to my wyll,  
 And settes my ioy and my lykyng when it may comm me tyll,  
 I mai drede of partyng, þat wyll be hate and yll : 31  
 For al my welth es bot wepyng when pyne mi saule sal spyll.  
 þe ioy þat men hase sene es lyckend tyl þe haye,  
 þat now es fayre and grene, and now wytes awaye.  
 Swylk es þis worlde, I wene, and bees till Domesdaye, 35  
 All in trauel and tene, fle þat na man it maye.  
 If þou luf in all þi thoght, and hate þe sylth of syn,  
 And gyf Hym þi sawle þat it boght, þat He þe dwell within,  
 Als Crist þi sawle hase soght, and þerof walde noght blyn,  
 Sa þou sal to blys be broght, and heuen won within. 40

þe kynd of luf es þis, þar it es trayst and trew,  
 To stand styl in stabylnes, and chaunge it for na new.  
 þe lyfe þat lufe myght synd, or euer in hert it knew,  
 Fra kare it tornes þat kyend, and lendes in myrth and glew.

For now, lufe þow, I rede, Cryste, as I þe tell, 45  
 And with aungels take þi stede: þat ioy loke þou noght sell!  
 In erth þow hate, I rede, all þat þi lufe may sell,  
 For luf es stalworth as þe dede, luf es hard as hell.

Luf es a lyght byrthen; lufe gladdes ȝong and alde;  
 Lufe es withowten pyne, as losers hase me talde; 50  
 Lufe es a gastylyne, þat makes men bygge and balde;  
 Of lufe sal he na thyng tyne þat hit in hert will halde.

Lufe es þe swettest thyng þat man in erth hase tane;  
 Lufe es Goddes derlyng; lufe byndes blode and bane.  
 In lufe be owre lykyng, I ne wate na better wane, 55  
 For me and my lufyng lufe makes bath be ane.

Bot fleschly lufe sal fare as dose þe flowre in May,  
 And lastand be na mare þan ane houre of a day,  
 And sythen syghe ful sare þar lust, þar pryde, þar play,  
 When þai er casten in kare til pyne þat lastes ay. 60

When þair bodys lyse in syn, þair sawls mai qwake and drede,  
 For vp sal ryse al men, and answer for þair dede.  
 If þai be fonden in syn, als now þair lyfe þai lede,  
 þai sal sytt hel within, and myrknes hase to mede.

Riche men þair hend sal wryng, and wicked werkes sal by 65  
 In flawme of fyre, bath knyght and keyng, with sorow schamfully.  
 If þou wil lufe, þan may þou syng til Cryst in melody;  
 þe lufe of Hym ouercoms al thyng, þarto þou traiste trewly.

45 For now] For þi MS. Lambeth 853. 51 wyne] = wynne MS.  
 65 hend] handes MS., apparently altered from hend.

¶I sygh and sob, bath day and nyght, for ane sa fayre of hew!  
 ¶ar es na thyng my hert mai light, bot lufe þat es ay new. 70  
 Wha sa had Hym in his syght, or in his hert Hym knew,  
 His mournyng turned til ioy ful bryght, his sang intil glew.

In myrth he lyfes, nyght and day, þat lufes þat swete chylde ;  
 It es Iesu, forsoth I say, of al mekest and mylde.

Writh fra hym walde al away, þof he wer neuer sa wylde, 75  
 He þat in hert lufed Hym þat day fra euel He wil hym schylde.

Of Iesu mast lyst me speke, þat al my bale may bete ;  
 Me thynk my hert may al tobreke when I thynk on þat swete ;  
 In lufe lacyd He hase my thoght, þat I sal neuer forgete. 79  
 Ful dere me thynk He hase me boght with blodi hende and fete.

For luf my hert es bowne to brest, when I þat faire behalde ;  
 Lufe es fair þare it es fest, þat neuer will be calde ;  
 Lufe vs reues þe nyght-rest, in grace it makes vs balde ;  
 Of al warkes luf es þe best, als haly men me talde.

Na wonder gyf I syghand be, and sithen in sorow be sette: 85  
 Iesu was nayled apon þe tre, and al blody forbette.  
 To thynk on Hym es grete pyté—how tenderly He grette—  
 þis hase He sufferde, man, for þe, if þat þou syn wyll lette.

¶are es na tonge in erth may tell of lufe þe swetnesse.  
 ¶at stedfastly in lufe kan dwell, his ioy es endlesse. 90  
 God schylde þat he sulde til hell, þat lufes and langand es,  
 Or euer his enmys sulde hym qwell, or make his luf be lesse.

Iesu es lufe þat lastes ay, til Hym es owre langyng ;  
 Iesu þe nyght turnes to þe day, þe dawyng intil spryng.  
 Iesu, thynk on vs now and ay, for þe we halde oure keyng; 95  
 Iesu, gyf vs grace, as þou wel may, to luf þe withowten endyng.

## B. THE NATURE OF THE BEE.

(The Thornton MS. (before 1450); ed. Horstmann, vol. i, p. 193.)

*Moralia Ricardi Heremite de Natura Apis.*

THE bee has thre kyndis. Ane es þat scho es neuer ydill, and scho es noghte with thaym þat will noghte wyrke, bot castys thaym owte, and puttes thaym awaye. Anothire es þat when scho flies scho takes erthe in hyr sette, þat scho be noghte lyghtly ouerheghede in the ayere of wynde. The 5 thyrde es þat scho kepes clene and bryghte hire wynge<sup>z</sup>.

Thus ryghtwyse men þat lufes God are neuer in ydillnes. For owthyre þay ere in trauayle, prayand, or thynkande, or redande, or othere gude doande; or wihtakand ydill mene, and schewand thaym worthy to be put fra þe ryste of heuene, 10 for þay will noghte trauayle here.

þay take erthe, þat es, þay halde þamselife vile and erthely, that thay be noghte blawene with þe wynde of vanyté and of prude. Thay kepe thaire wynges clene, that es, þe twa commandementes of charyté þay fulfill in gud concyens, and 15 thay hafe othyre vertus, vnblendyd with þe sylthe of syne and vnclene luste.

Arestotill sais þat þe bees are feghtande agaynes hym þat will drawe þaire hony fra thayme. Swa sulde we do agaynes deuells, þat afforces thame to reue fra vs þe hony of poure 20 lyfe and of grace. For many are, þat neuer kane halde þe ordyre of lufe ynence þaire frendys, sybbe or fremmede. Bot outhire þay lufe þaym ouer mekill, settand thaire thoghte vnryghtwyse on thaym, or þay luf thayme ouer lyttill, yf þay doo noghte all as þey wolde till þame. Swylke kane 25 noghte syghte for thaire hony, forthy þe deuelle turns it to wormes, and makes þeire saules oftesythes full bitter in

<sup>22</sup> ynence] ynesche MS.      <sup>23</sup> mekill] MS follows with: or that lufe þame ouer lyttill, *caught up from below*.

angwys, and tene, and besynes of vayne thoghtes, and oþer wrechidnes. For thay are so heuy in erthely frenchype þat 30 þay may noghte flee intill þe lufe of Iesu Criste, in þe wylke þay moghte wele forgaa þe lufe of all creatures lysande in erthe.

Wharefore, accordandly, Arystotill sais þat some sowheles are of gude flyghyng, þat passes fra a lande to anothire. 35 Some are of ill flyghynge, for heuynes of body, and for(þi) þaire neste es noghte ferre fra þe erthe. Thus es it of thayme þat turnes þame to Godes seruys. Some are of gude flyeghyng, for thay flye fra erthe to heuene, and rystes thayme thare in thoghte, and are sedde in delite of Goddes 40 lufe, and has thoghte of na lufe of þe worlde. Some are þat kan noghte flyghe fra þis lande, bot in þe waye late theyre herte ryste, and delyttes þaym in sere lufes of mene and womene, als þay come and gaa, nowe ane and nowe anothire. And in Iesu Criste þay kan synde na swettnes; or if þay any tyme 45 fele oghte, it es swa lyttill and swa schorte, for othire thoghtes þat are in thayme, þat it brynges thaym till na stabylnes.

(F)or þay are lyke till a sowle þat es callede strucyo or storke, þat has wenges, and it may noghte flye for charge of body. Swa þay hafe vndirstandynge, and fastes, and wakes, and 50 semes haly to mens syghte; bot thay may noghte flye to lufe and contemplacyone of God, þay are so chargede wyth othyre affeccyons and othire vanytés.

### THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

(Chap. xi of *The Form of Perfect Living*; ed. Horstmann, vol. i, p. 196.)

þe seuene gystes of þe Haly Gaste, þat ere gyzene to men and wymmene þat er ordayneðe to þe ioye of heuene, and 55 ledys theire lyfe in this worlde reghtwysely. Thire are thay:— Wysdome, Undyrstandynge, Counsayle, Strenghe, Connynge,

Peté, the Drede of God. Begynne we at Consaile, for þareof  
es myster at the begynnynge of oure werkes, þat vs myslyke  
noghte astyrwarde. With thire seuene gystes þe Haly Gaste  
teches sere mene serely. 60

Consaile es doyng awaye of worldes reches, and of all  
delytes of all thynges þat mane may be tagyld with, in thoghte  
or dede, and þarwith drawynge intill contemplacyone of  
Gode.

Undyrstandyng es to knawe whate es to doo, and whate 65  
es to lese, and þat that sall be gyffene, to gyffe it to thaym  
þat has nede, noghte till oþer þat has na myster.

Wysedome es forgetynge of erthely thynges and thynkyng  
of heuen, with discrecyone of all mens dedys. In þis gyste  
schynes contemplacyone, þat es, Saynt Austyne says, a gastely 70  
dede of fleschely affeccyones, thurghe þe ioye of a raysede  
thoghte.

Strenghe es lastynge to fullfill gude purpose, þat it be  
noghte leste, for wele ne for waa.

Peté es þat a man be mylde, and gaynesay noghte Haly 75  
Writte whene it smytes his synnys, whethire he vndyrstand  
it or noghte; bot in all his myghte purge he þe vilté of syn  
in hym and oþer.

Connynge es þat makes a man of gude *(hope)*, noghte  
ruysand hym of his reghtewysnes, bot sorowand of his 80  
synnys, and þat man gedyrs erthely gude anely to the  
honour of God, and prow to oþer mene þane hymselfe.

The Drede of God es þat we turne noghte agayne till oure  
synne thurghe any ill eggynge. And þan es drede perfite in vs  
and gastely, when we drede to wrethe God in þe leste synne 85  
þat we kane knawe, and flesse it als venyme.

60 teches] towches *Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64.* 63 þar] þat *MS.*  
Thornton. 69 mens] so *Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64*—mene *MS.*  
Thornton. 79 hope] from *Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64*: om. *MS.*  
Thornton. 84 þan] *Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64*: *Jen MS. Arundel 507*:  
þat *MS.* Thornton.

## V

## SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GRENE KNIGHT

ABOUT 1350-75.

*Sir Gawayne* has been admirably edited by Sir F. Madden for the Bannatyne Club, 1839; by R. Morris for the Early English Text Society; and in a useful students' edition by E. V. Gordon and J. R. R. Tolkien, Oxford 1925. It is found in British Museum MS. Nero A X, together with three other alliterative poems, named from their first words *Pearl*, *Patience*, and *Cleanness*. *Pearl* supplies the next specimen; *Patience* exemplifies the virtue by the trials of Jonah; *Cleanness* teaches purity of life from Scriptural stories. All these poems are in the same handwriting; all are in a West-Midland dialect; all appear to be of the same age; and none is without literary merit. For these reasons, which are good but not conclusive, they are assumed to be by the same author. Attempts to identify this author have been unsuccessful.

The story runs as follows :

King Arthur is making his Christmas feast with his court at Camelot. On New Year's Day he declares that he will not eat until he has seen or heard some marvel. The first course of the feast is barely served when a tall knight, clad all in green, with green hair, and a green horse to match, rides into the hall. He carries a holly bough and a huge axe, and tauntingly invites any knight to strike him a blow with the axe, on condition that he will stand a return blow on the same day a year hence. Gawayne accepts the challenge and strikes off the Green Knight's head. The Green Knight gathers up his head, gives Gawayne an appointment for next New Year's Day at the Green Chapel, and rides off.

The year passes, and Gawayne, despite the fears of the court, sets out in quest of the Green Chapel. On Christmas Eve he

arrives at a splendid castle, and finding that the Green Chapel is close at hand, accepts an invitation to stay and rest until New Year's Day. On each of three days the knight of the castle goes hunting, and persuades Gawayne to rest at home. They make an agreement that each shall give the other whatever he gets. The lady of the castle makes love to Gawayne, and kisses him once on the first day, twice on the second day, thrice on the third day ; and on the third day she gives him her girdle, which he accepts because it has the magic power of preserving the wearer from wounds. Each evening he duly gives the kisses to the knight, and receives in return the spoils of the hunting of deer and boar and fox. But he conceals the girdle.

The extract begins with Gawayne preparing on New Year's morning to stand the return blow at the Green Chapel.

The poem ends by the Green Knight revealing that he is himself the lord of the castle ; that he went to Arthur's court at the suggestion of Morgan la Fay ; that he had urged his wife to make love to Gawayne and try his virtue ; and that he would not have harmed him at all, if he had not committed the slight fault of concealing the girdle. Gawayne returns to the court, bearing the girdle as a sign of his shame, and tells his story. The knights of the court agree in future to wear a bright green belt for Gawayne's sake.

*Sir Gawayne* is admittedly the best of the alliterative romances. It must have come down to us practically as it was written by the poet, for it is free from the flatness and conventional phrasing which is characteristic of romances that have passed through many popular recensions. The descriptions of nature, of armour and dresses, the hunting scenes, and the love making, are all excellently done ; and the poet shows the same richness of imagination and skill in producing pictorial effects that are so noticeable in *Pearl*. He has too a quiet humour that recalls Chaucer in some of his moods.

## THE TESTING OF SIR GAWAYNE.

British Museum MS. Nero A X (about 1400); ed. R. Morris, ll. 2069 ff.

Facsimile of MS. ed. Sir Israel Gollancz, E. E. T. S. 1924.

THE brygge watz brayde doun, and þe brode zates  
 Vnbarred and born open vpon boþe halues on eithir  
 De burne blessed hym blyue, and þe bredez passed;  
 Pryses þe porter bisore þe prynce kneled, *Sur gean*  
 Gef hym God and goud day, þat Gawayn He sauë, *man* 5  
 And went on his way with his wyȝe one, *wigale. e.*  
 þat schulde teche hym to tourne to þat tene place  
 þer he ruful race he schulde resayue. *recre*  
 þay boȝen bi bonkkes þer boȝes ar bare; *newed banks where banks are bare*  
 þay clomben bi clyffeȝ þer clenges þe colde. *climbed cliffs where cliffs are cold* 10  
 þe heuen watz vp hale, bot vgly þer vnder. *was down but ugly under*  
 Mist mused on þe mor, malt on þe mounteȝ, *moor with mountain* *moultan. (e.)*  
 Vch hille hadde a hatte, a myst-hakel huge.  
 Brokeȝ byled and breke bi bonkkes abouȝe, *da chun* *showed*  
 Schyre schaterande on schoreȝ, þer þay doun schowued. *shore* *15*  
 Wela wylle watz þe way þer þay bi wod schulden,  
 Til hit watz sone sesoun þat þe sunne ryses  
 þat tyde. *hakel* *tray*  
 þay were on a hille ful hyȝe,  
 þe quyte snaw lay bisyde; *20*  
 þe burne þat rod hym by  
 Bede his mayster abide.  
 ' For I haf wonnen yow hider, wyȝe, at þis tyme,  
 And now nar þe not fer fro þat note place  
 þat þe han spied and spuryed so specially after. *25*  
 Bot I schal say yow for soþe, syþen I yow knowe,  
 And þe ar a lede vpon lyue þat I wel louy,  
 Wolde þe worch bi my wytte, þe worþed þe better.  
 þe place þat þe prece to ful perelous is halden.  
 þer woneȝ a wyȝe in þat waste, þe worst vpon erþe, *30*

For he is stiffe and sturne, and to strike louies,  
 And more he is þen any mon vpon myddelerde,  
 And his body bigger þen þe best fowre  
 þat ar in Arþureȝ hous, Hestor, oþer oþer.  
 He cheueȝ þat chaunce at þe chapel grene, 35  
 þer passes non bi þat place so proude in his armes  
 þat he ne dyngeȝ hym to deþe with dynt of his honde;  
 For he is a mon methles, and mercy non vses,  
 For be hit chorle oþer chaplain þat bi þe chapel rydes,  
 Monk oþer masse-prest, oþer any mon elles, 40  
 Hym þynk as queme hym to quelle as quyk go hymseluen.  
 Forþy I say þe, as soþe as ȝe in sadel sitte,  
 Com ȝe þere, ȝe be kylled, may þe, knyȝt, rede—  
 Trawe ȝe me þat trwely—þaz ȝe had twenty lyues  
 to spende. 45

He hatȝ wonyd here ful ȝore,  
 On bent much baret bende,  
 Aȝayn his dynteȝ sore  
 ȝe may not yow defende.

‘Forþy, goude Sir Gawayn, let þe gome one, 50  
 And gotȝ away sum oþer gate, vpon Goddeȝ halue!  
 Cayreȝ bi sum oþer kyth, þer Kryst mot yow spede,  
 And I schal hyȝ me hom aȝayn, and hete yow syrre  
 þat I schal swere bi God and alle His gode halȝȝ, 55  
 As help me God and þe halydam, and oþeȝ innoghe,  
 þat I schal lelly yow layne, and lance neuer tale  
 þat euer ȝe fondet to fle for freke þat I wyrst.’  
 ‘Grant merci,’ quod Gawayn, and gruchyng he sayde:  
 ‘Wel worth þe, wyȝe, þat woldeȝ my gode,  
 And þat lelly me layne I leue wel þou woldeȝ. 60  
 Bot helde þou hit neuer so holde, and I here passed,  
 Founded for ferde for to fle, in fourme þat þou telleȝ,  
 I were a knyȝt kowarde, I myȝt not be excused.

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Bot I wyl to þe chapel, for chaunce þat may falle,  
 And talk wyth þat ilk tulk þe tale þat me lyste, 65  
 Worþe hit wele oþer wo, as þe wyrde lykeþ  
 hit hase.

þaþe he be a sturn knape  
 To stiȝtel, and stad with staue,  
 Ful wel con Dryȝtyn schape 70  
 His seruaunteþ for to sauue.'

'Mary !' quod þat oþer mon, 'now þou so much spelleþ  
 þat þou wylt þyn awen nye nyme to þyseluen,  
 And þe lyst lese þy lyf, þe lette I ne kepe.

Haf here þi helme on þy hede, þi spere in þi honde, 75  
 And ryde me doun þis ilk rake bi ȝon rokke syde  
 Til þou be broȝt to þe boȝem of þe brem valay.  
 Þenne loke a littel on þe launde, on þi lyfste honde,  
 And þou schal se in þat slade þe self chapel,  
 And þe borelych burne on bent þat hit kepeþ. 80

Now fareþ wel, on Godeþ half! Gawayn þe noble ;  
 For alle þe golde vpon grounde I nolde go wyth þe,  
 Ne bere þe felaschip þurȝ þis fryth on fote syrre.'  
 Bi þat þe wyȝe in þe wod wendeþ his brydel,  
 Hit þe hors with þe heleþ as harde as he myȝt, 85  
 Lepeþ hym ouer þe launde, and leueþ þe knyȝt þere  
 al one.

'Bi Goddeþ self !' quod Gawayn,  
 'I wyl nauþer grete ne grone ;  
 To Goddeþ wylle I am ful bayn, 90  
 And to Hym I haf me tone.'

Thenne gyrdeþ he to Gryngolet, and gedereþ þe rake,  
 Schowueþ in bi a schore at a schaȝe syde,  
 Rideþ þurȝ þe roȝe bonk ryȝt to þe dale ;  
 And þenne he wayted hym aboute, and wylde hit hym þoȝt,  
 And seȝe no syngne of resette bisydeþ nowhere, 95

Bot hyȝe bonkkeȝ and brent vpon boȝe halue,  
 And ruȝe knokled knarreȝ with knorned stonex;  
 Pe-skweȝ of þe scowtes skayned hym þoȝt.  
 Penne he houed, and wythhylde his hors at þat tyde, 100  
 And ofte chaunged his cher þe chapel to seche: —*Seek*  
 He seȝ non suche in no syde, and selli hym þoȝt  
 Sone, a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit we(re),  
 A balȝ berȝ bi a bonke, þe brymme bysyde,  
 Bi a forȝ of a flode þat ferked þare; 105  
 þe borne blubred þerinne as hit boyled hade.  
 þe knyȝt kacheȝ his caple, and com to þe lawe,  
 Lijteȝ doun luflyly, and at a lynde tacheȝ  
 þe rayne and his riche with a roȝe braunche.  
 Penne he boȝeȝ to þe berȝe, aboute hit he walkeȝ, 110  
 Debatande with hymself quat hit be myȝt.  
 Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayþer syde,  
 And ouergrownen with gresse in glodes aywhere,  
 And al watȝ holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue,  
 Or a creuisse of an olde cragge, he couȝe hit noȝt deme 115  
 with spelle.  
 ‘We! Lorde,’ quod þe gentyle knyȝt,  
 ‘Wheþer þis be þe grene chapelle?  
 He(re) myȝt aboute mydnyȝt  
 þe dele his matynnes telle! 120  
 ‘Now iwyssse,’ quod Wowayn, ‘wysty is here;  
 þis oritore is vgly, with erbeȝ ouergrownen;  
 Wel bisemeȝ þe wyȝe wruxled in grene  
 Dele here his deuocioun on þe deueleȝ wyse.  
 Now I fele hit is þe fende, in my fyue wytteȝ, 125  
 þat hatȝ stoken me þis steuen to strye me here.  
 þis is a chapel of meschaunce, þat chekke hit bytyde!  
 Hit is þe corsedest kyrk þat euer I com inne!  
 With heȝe helme on his hede, his launce in his honde,  
 He romeȝ vp to þe rokke of þo roȝ wonex. 130

þene herde he, of þat hyȝe hil, in a harde roche,  
 Biȝonde þe broke, in a bonk, a wonder breme noyse.  
 Quat! hit clatered in þe clyff, as hit cleue schulde,  
 As one vpon a gryndelston hade grounden a syþe;  
 What! hit wharred and whette, as water at a mulne; 135  
 What! hit rusched and ronge, rawþe to here.  
 Þenne 'Bi Godde!' quod Gawayn, 'þat gere as I trowe  
 Is ryched at þe reuerence me, renk, to mete  
 bi rote.

Let God worche, we loo!  
 140  
 Hit helppȝe me not a mote.  
 My lif þaȝ I forgo,  
 Drede dotȝ me no lote.'

Thenne þe knyȝt con calle ful hyȝe:  
 'Who stiȝtles in þis sted, me steuen to holde?' 145  
 For now is gode Gawayn goande ryȝt here.  
 If any wyȝe oȝt wyl, wynne hider fast,  
 Oþer now oþer neuer, his nedeȝ to spede.'  
 'Abyde,' quod on on þe bonke abouen ouer his hede,  
 'And þou schal haf al in hast þat I þe hyȝt ones.' 150  
 ȝet he rusched on þat rurde rapely a þrowe,  
 And wyth quettyng awhaiȝ, er he wolde lyȝt;  
 And syþen he keuereȝ bi a cragge, and comeȝ of a hole,  
 Whyrlande out of a wro wyth a felle weppen,  
 A Deneȝ ax nwe dyȝt, þe dynt with <þ>o ȝelde, 155  
 With a borelych bytte bende by þe halme,  
 Fyled in a fylor, fowre fote large,—  
 Hit watȝ no lasse bi þat lace þat lemed ful bryȝt,—  
 And þe gome in þe grene gered as fyrist,  
 Boþe þe lyre and þe leggeȝ, lokkeȝ and berde, 160  
 Saue þat fayre on his fote he foundeȝ on þe erþe,  
 Sette þe stèle to þe stone, and stalked bysyde.  
 Whan he wan to þe watter, þer he wade nolde,

He hypped ouer on hys ax, and orpedly stryde<sub>3</sub>,  
Bremly bro<sub>e</sub> on a bent þat brode wat<sub>3</sub> aboute, 165  
on snewe.

Sir Gawayn þe kny<sub>3</sub>t con mete,  
He ne lutte hym no þyng lowe;  
þat oþer sayde 'Now, sir swete,  
Of steuen mon may þe trowe. 170

'Gawayn,' quod þat grene gome, 'God þe mot loke!  
Iwysse þou art welcom, wy<sub>3</sub>e, to my place,  
And þou hat<sub>3</sub> tymed þi trauayl as truee mon schulde,  
And þou knowe<sub>3</sub> þe couenaunte<sub>3</sub> kest vus bytwene:  
At þis tyme twelmonyth þou toke þat þe falled, 175  
And I schulde at þis nwe ȝere ȝeþly þe quyte.  
And we ar in þis valay verayly oure one;  
Here ar no renkes vs to rydde, rele as vus like<sub>3</sub>.  
Haf þy helme of þy hede, and haf here þy pay. 180  
Busk no more debate þen I þe bede þenne  
When þou wypped of my hede at a wap one.'  
'Nay, bi God' quod Gawayn, 'þat me gost lante!  
I schal gruch þe no grwe for grem þat falle<sub>3</sub>.  
Bot stÿtel þe vpon on strok, and I schal stonde styllé  
And warp þe no wernyng to worch as þe lyke<sub>3</sub>, 185  
nowhere.'

He lened with þe nek, and lutte,  
And schewed þat schyre al bare,  
And lette as he noȝt dutte;  
For drede he wolde not dare. 190

Then þe gome in þe grene grayþed hym swyþe,  
Gedere<sub>3</sub> vp hys grymme tole Gawayn to smyte;  
With alle þe bur in his body he ber hit on lofte,  
Munt as maȝtyly as marre hym he wolde:  
Hade hit dryuen adoun as dre<sub>3</sub> as he atled, 195  
þer hade ben ded of his dynt þat doȝty wat<sub>3</sub> euer.

172 welcom] welcon MS. 179 þy (1st)] þy þy MS.

## 52 V. SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GRENE KNIGHT

Bot Gawayn on þat giserne glyfte hym bysyde,  
 As hit com glydande adoun on glode hym to schende,  
 And schranke a lytel with þe schulderes for þe scharp yrne.  
 þat oþer schalk wylt a schunt þe schene wylthalde, 200  
 And þenne repreued he þe prynce with mony prowde wordes :  
 'þou art not Gawayn,' quod þe gome, 'þat is so goud  
 halden,

þat neuer arȝed for no here, by hylle ne be vale,  
 And now þou fles for ferde er þou sele harme, 205  
 Such cowardise of þat knyȝt cowþe I neuer here.  
 Nawþer fyked I ne flaze, freke, quen þou myntest,  
 Ne kest no kauelacion, in kynge, hous Arþor.  
 My hede flaz to my fote, and ȝet flaz I neuer;  
 And þou, er any harme hent, arȝes in hert;  
 Wherfore þe better burne me burde be called  
 þerfore.' ✓

Quod Gawayn 'I schunt one, 215  
 And so wyl I no more;  
 Bot þaz my hede falle on þe ston, 220  
 I con not hit restore.

Bot busk, burne, bi þi sayth! and bryng me to þe poynt.  
 Dele to me my destiné, and do hit out of honde,  
 For I schal stonde þe a strok, and start no more  
 Til þyn ax haue me hitte: haf here my. trawþe.'  
 'Haf at þe þenne!' quod þat oþer, and heueȝ hit aloste, 225  
 And wayteȝ as wroþely as he wode were.  
 He mynteȝ at hym maȝtly, bot not þe mon ryueȝ,  
 Withhelde heterly h*(i)*s honde, er hit hurt myȝt.  
 Gawayn grayþely hit bydeȝ, and glent with no membre,  
 Bot stode styll as þe ston, oþer a stubbe auþer  
 þat rafeled is in rochē grounde with roteȝ a hundreth. 235  
 þen muryly este con he mele, þe mon in þe grene:  
 'So now þou hatȝ bi hert holle, hitte me bihou*(e)*s.  
 Halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt,

And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may.' 230

Gawayn ful gryndelly with greme þenne sayde :

'Wy ! þresh on, þou þro mon, þou þreteȝ to longe.

I hope þat þi hert arȝe wyth þyn awen seluen.'

'For soþe,' quod þat oþer frake, 'so felly þou spekeȝ,

I wyl no lenger on lyte lette þin ernde 235

riȝt nowe.'

þenne tas he hym stryþe to stryke,

And frounseþ boþe lyppe and browe.

No meruayle þaȝ hym myslyke

þat hoped of no rescowe. 240

He lyfes lyȝtly his lome, and let hit doun fayre,

With þe barbe of þe bitte bi þe bare nek,

þaȝ he homered heterly, hurt hym no more,

Bot snyrt hym on þat on syde, þat seuered þe hyde ;

þe scharp schrank to þe flesche þurȝ þe schyre grece 245

þat þe schene blod ouer his schulderes schot to þe erþe,

And quen þe burne seȝ þe blode blenk on þe snawe,

He sprit forth spenne fote more þen a spere lenþe,

Hent heterly his helme, and on his hed cast,

Schot with his schuldereȝ his fayre schelde vnder, 250

Braydeȝ out a bryȝt sworde, and bremely he spekeȝ ;—

Neuer syn þat he watȝ burne borne of his moder

Watȝ he neuer in þis worlde wyȝe half so blyþe—

'Blynne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no mo !

I haf a stroke in þis stede withoute stryf hent, 255

And if þow recheȝ me any mo, I redyly schal quyte,

And ȝelde ȝederly aȝayn—and þerto ȝe tryst—

and foo.

Bot on stroke here me falleȝ—

þe couenaunt schop ryȝt so

⟨Schapen⟩ in Arþureȝ halleȝ—

And þerfore, hende, now hoo !'

The haþel heldet hym fro, and on his ax rested,  
 Sette þe schaft vpon schore, and to þe scharp lened,  
 And loked to þe leude þat on þe launde ȝede, 265  
 How þat doȝty, dredles, deruely þer stondes  
 Armed, ful aȝleȝ: in hert hit hym lykeȝ.  
 Þenn he meleȝ muryly wylly a much steuen,  
 And wylly a ryȝn kande rurde he to þe renk sayde:  
 'Bolde burne, on þis bent be not so gryndel. 270  
 No mon here vnmanerly þe mysboden habbeȝ  
 Ne kyd, bot as couenaunde at kyngeȝ kort schaped.  
 I hyȝt þe a strok and þou hit hatȝ; halde þe wel payed.  
 I relece þe of þe remnaunt of ryȝtes alle oþer.  
 Iif I deliuer had bene, a boffet paraunter 275  
 I couþe wroþeloker haf waret,—to þe haf wroȝt anger.  
 Fyrst I mansed þe muryly with a mynt one,  
 And roue þe wylly no rof sore, with ryȝt I þe profered  
 For þe forwarde þat we fest in þe fyrst nyȝt,  
 And þou trystyly þe trawþe and trwly me haldeȝ, 280  
 Al þe gayne þow me gef, as god mon schulde.  
 þat oþer munt for þe morne, mon, I þe profered,  
 þou kyssedes my clere wyf, þe cosseȝ me raȝteȝ.  
 For boþe two here I þe bede bot two bare myntes  
 boute scaþe. 285

Trwe mon trwe restore,  
 Þenne þar mon drede no waþe.  
 At þe þrid þou fayled þore,  
 And þerfor þat tappe ta þe.

For hit is my wede þat þou wereȝ, þat ilke wouen girdel, 290  
 Myn owen wyf hit þe weued, I wot wel forsoþe.  
 Now know I wel þy cosses, and þy costes als,  
 And þe wowing of my wyf: I wroȝt hit myseluen.  
 I sende hir to asay þe, and soþly me þynkeȝ  
 On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote ȝede. 295  
 As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,

So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay knyȝteȝ.  
 Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, and lewté yow wonted ;  
 Bot þat watȝ for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauþer,  
 Bot for ȝe lufed your lys; þe lasse I yow blame.' 300  
 þat oþer stif mon in study stôd a gret whyle,  
 So agreued for greme he gryed withinne ;  
 Alle þe blode of his brest blonde in his face,  
 þat al he schrank for schome þat þe schalk talked.  
 þe forme worde vpon folde þat þe freke meled : 305  
 'Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe !  
 In yow is vylany and vyse þat vertue disstryeȝ.  
 þenne he kaȝt to þe knot, and þe kest lawseȝ,  
 Brayde broþely þe belt to þe burne seluen :  
 'Lo ! þer þe falssyng ! foule mot hit falle ! 310  
 For care of þy knokke cowardyse me taȝt  
 To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake,  
 þat is larges and lewté þat longeȝ to knyȝteȝ.  
 Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer  
 Of trecherye and vnrawþe : boþe bityde sorȝe 315  
 and care !

I biknowe yow, knyȝt, here styllie,  
 Al fawty is my fare ;  
 Leteȝ me ouertake your wylle  
 And este I schal be ware.' 320

Thenn loȝe þat oþer leude, and luflyly sayde :  
 'I halde hit hardily hole, þe harme þat I hade.  
 þou art confessed so clene, beknownen of þy mysses,  
 And hatȝ þe penaunce apert of þe poynt of myn egge,  
 I halde þe polysed of þat plyȝt, and pured as clene 325  
 As þou hadeȝ neuer forfeted syþen þou watȝ fyrst borne ;  
 And I gif þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed,  
 For hit is grene as my goune. Sir Gawayne, ȝe maye  
 þenk vpon þis ilke þrepe, þer þou forth þrynges

322 hardily] hardilyly MS.

Among prynces of prys; and þis a pure token 330  
 Of þe chaunce *at* þe grene chapel *of* cheualrous knyȝteȝ.

And ȝe schal in þis nwe ȝer aȝayn to my woneȝ,  
 And we schyn reuel þe remnaunt of þis ryche fest  
 ful bene.'

þer laged hym fast þe lord, 335  
 And sayde 'With my wys, I wene,  
 We schal yow wel acorde,  
 þat watȝ your enmy kene.'

'Nay, for soþe,' quod þe segge, and sesed hys helme,  
 And hatȝ hit of hendely, and þe haþel þonkkeȝ, 340  
 'I haf soiorned sadly; sele yow bytyde!

And He ȝelde hit yow ȝare þat ȝarkkeȝ al menskes!  
 And comaundeȝ me to þat cortays, your comlych fere,  
 Boþe þat on and þat oþer myn honoured ladyeȝ,  
 þat þus hor knyȝt wyth hor kest han koynþly bigyled. 345

Bot hit is no ferly þaȝ a sole madde,  
 And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe,  
 For so watȝ Adam in erde with one bygyled,  
 And Salomon with sele sere, and Samson eftisoneȝ,  
 Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde, and Dauyth þerafter 350  
 Watȝ blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled.

Now þese were wrathed wyth her wyles, hit were a wynne  
 huge

To luf hom wel, and leue hem not, a leude þat coupe.

For þes wer forne þe freest, þat folȝed alle þe sele

Exellently of alle þyse oþer vnder heuhenryche 355  
 þat mused;

And alle þay were biwyled  
 With wymmen þat þay vsed.

þaȝ I be now bigyled,  
 Me þink me burde be excused.'

331 *at . . . of (2nd)] transposed in MS.* 358 *With] With wyth MS.*

## VI

### THE PEARL

ABOUT 1375.

The facts leading to the presumption that *Pearl* and *Sir Gawayne* are by the same author have been mentioned in the prefatory note to *Sir Gawayne*. But the poems are markedly different in subject and tone. *Pearl*, like Chaucer's *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, is an elegy cast in the vision form made popular by the *Roman de la Rose*. The subject is a little girl, who died before she was two years old, and the treatment is deeply religious. Her death is symbolized as the loss of a pearl without spot, that slipped from its owner's hand through the grass into the earth.

On a festival day in August, the poet, while mourning his loss, falls asleep on his child's grave. His spirit passes to a land of flowers and rich fruits, where birds of flaming hues sing incomparably, where the cliffs are of crystal and beryl, and a river runs in a bed of gleaming jewels. On the other side of the river, which is lovelier still, sits a maiden dressed all in white, with coronet and ornaments of pearl. The poet recognizes his lost child, but cannot call to her for wonder and dread, until she rises and salutes him. He complains that since her loss he has been a joyless jeweller. She rebukes him gently; she is not lost, but made safe and beautiful for ever. Overjoyed, he says he will cross the river and live with her in this paradise; but she warns him against such presumption, for since Adam's fall the river may be crossed only by the way of death. He is in despair to think that now that his Pearl is found, he must still live joyless, apart from her; but he is bidden to resign himself to God's will and mercy, because rebellion will avail him nothing.

At this point begins the argument on salvation by grace or salvation by works which is here reprinted.

The maiden then continues the discussion, explaining that 'the innocent are ay safe by right', and that only those who come as little children can win the bliss sought by the man who sold his all for a matchless pearl.

Next the poet asks whence her beauty comes, and what her office is. She replies that she is one of the brides of Christ, whom St. John in the *Apocalypse* saw arrayed for the bridal in the New Jerusalem. He asks to see their mansions, and by special grace is allowed to view the holy city from without. He sees it as St. John saw it, gleaming with gold, with its pillars of precious stone, its gates of pearl; its streets lighted by a divine radiance, so that there is no need of moon or sun. There is no church or chapel or temple there: God himself is the minister, and Christ is the sacrifice. Mortal eye could not bear the splendour, and he stood 'as styll as dased quayle'. At evening came the procession of the virgin brides of Christ, each bearing on her breast the pearl of perfect happiness. The Lamb leads them, in pearl-white robes, his side bleeding, his face rapt; while elders make obeisance, and angels sing songs of joy as He nears the throne of God.

Suddenly the poet sees his Pearl among her companions. Overcome with longing and delight, he tries to cross the river, only to wake in the garden where he fell asleep. Henceforth he is resigned to the pleasure of the Prince of Heaven.

The reader will be able to judge the author's poetical gift from the selection, which has been chosen as one of the less ornate passages. Even here the form distracts attention from the matter by its elaborateness. A difficult rime scheme is superimposed on the alliterative line; stanza is interlinked with stanza; each group of five stanzas is distinguished by a similar refrain, and bound to the preceding and following groups by repetition in the first and last lines. So too the close of the poem echoes the beginning. With such intricacy of plan, it is not surprising that the rime is sometimes forced, and the sense strained or obscure. It is rather a matter for wonder that, in so long a work, the author was able to maintain his marvellous technique without completely sacrificing poetry to metrical gymnastics.

The highly wrought, almost overwrought, effect is heightened when the poem is read as a whole. If *Piers Plowman* gives a realistic picture of the drabness of mediaeval life, *Pearl*, more especially in the early stanzas, shows a richness of imagery and a luxuriance in light and colour that seem scarcely English. Yet they have their parallels in the decorative art of the time—the elaborate carving in wood and stone; the rich colouring of tapestries, of illuminated books and painted glass; the designs of the jewellers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths, which even the notaries who made the old inventories cannot pass without a word of admiration. The *Pearl* reminds us of the tribute due to the artists and craftsmen of the fourteenth century.

The edition by C. G. Osgood, Boston 1906, is handy. The minor edition by Sir I. Gollancz, 1921, includes a translation.

## THE PEARL, ll. 361-612.

(MS. Cotton Nero A X (about 1400).)

THENNE demed I to þat dainyselle :

‘ Ne worþe no wrathþe vnto my Lorde,  
If rapely 〈I〉 raue, spornande in spelle ;  
My herte watȝ al wyth mysse remorde,  
As wallande water gotȝ out of welle.      5  
I do me ay in Hys mysererecorde ;  
Rebuke me neuer wyth wordeȝ felle,  
þaȝ I forloyne, my dere endorde,  
Bot kyþeȝ me kyndely your coumforde,  
Pytosly þenkande vpon þyssse :      10  
Of care and me ȝe made acorde,  
þat er watȝ grounde of alle my blysse.

‘ My blysse, my bale, ȝe han ben hoþe,  
Bot much þe bygger ȝet watȝ my mon ;  
Fro þou watȝ wroken fro vch a woþe,      15  
I wyste neuer quere my perle watȝ gon.

9 kyþeȝ] lyþeȝ MS

Now I hit se, now leþeȝ my loþe;  
 And, quen we departed, we wern at on;  
 God forbede we be now wroþe,  
 We meten so selden by stok oþer ston.      20  
 þaȝ cortaysly ȝe carp con,  
 I am bot mol and manereȝ myssse;  
 Bot Crystes mersy, and Mary, and Ion,  
 þise arn þe grounde of alle my blyssse.

‘In blyssse I se þe blyþely blent,  
 And I a man al mornys mate;  
 ȝe take þeron ful lyttel tente,  
 þaȝ I hente ofte harmeȝ hate.      25  
 Bot now I am here in your presente,  
 I wolde bysech, wytouten debate,  
 ȝe wolde me say in sobre asente  
 What lyf ȝe lede erly and late.  
 For I am ful fayn þat your astate  
 Is worþen to worschyp and wele, iwyssse;  
 Of alle my ioy þe hyȝe gate  
 Hit is, *and* grounde of alle my blyssse.’      30  
 35

‘Now blyssse, burne, mot þe bytyde,’  
 þen sayde þat lufsum of lyth and lere,  
 ‘And welcum here to walk and byde,  
 For now þy speche is to me dere.      40  
 Maysterful mod and hyȝe pryde,  
 I hete þe, arn heterly hated here.  
 My Lorde ne loueȝ not for to chyde,  
 For meke arn alle þat woneȝ Hym nere;  
 And when in Hys place þou schal apere,  
 Be dep deuote in hol mekenesse;      45  
 My Lorde þe Lamb loueȝ ay such chere,  
 þat is þe grounde of alle my blyssse.

‘A blyſful lyf þou says I lede ;  
 þou woldeſ knaw þeroſ þe ſtage. 50  
 þow wost wel when þy perle con ſchede  
 I wat̄ ful ȝong and tender of age ;  
 Bot my Lorde þe Lombe, þur̄ Hys Godhede,  
 He toke myſelf to Hys maryage,  
 Corounde me quene in blyſſe to brede 55  
 In lenghe of dayeſ þat euer ſchal wage ;  
 And ſeſed in alle Hys herytage  
 Hys leſ is, I am holy Hysſe ;  
 Hys preſe, Hys prys, and Hys parage  
 Is rote and grounde of alle my blyſſe.’ 60

‘Blyſſful,’ quod I, ‘may þys be trwe ?—  
 Dyspleſeſ not if I ſpeke error—  
 Art þou þe quene of heueneſ blwe,  
 þat al þys worlde ſchal do honour ?  
 We leuen on Marye þat grace of grewe, 65  
 þat ber a barne of vyrgynſ flour ;  
 þe croune fro hyr quo moſt remwe  
 Bot ho hir paſſed in ſum fauour ?  
 Now, for synglerty o hyr dousour,  
 We calle hyr Fenyx of Arraby, 70  
 þat freles fleſe of hyr fasoſ,  
 Lyk to þe quen of cortaysye.’

‘Cortayſe Quen,’ penne ſ(a)yde þat gaye,  
 Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,  
 ‘Makeleſ Moder and myryest May, 75  
 Blessed Bygynner of vch a grace !’  
 Penne ros ho vp and con reſtay,  
 And ſpeke me towarde in þat ſpace :  
 ‘Sir, ſeſe here porcheſ and ſongeſ pray,  
 Bot ſupplantoreſ none wythinne þys place. 80  
 þat emperife al heueneſ hat̄,

And vr̄þe and helle in her bayly ;  
 Of erytage ȝet non wyl ho chace,  
 For ho is quen of cortaysye.

‘ The court of þe kyndom of God alyue  
 Hatȝ a property in hytself beyng :      85  
 Alle þat may þerinne aryue  
 Of alle þe reme is quen oþer kyng,  
 And neuer oþer ȝet schal depryue,  
 Bot vchon fayn of oþereȝ hafyng,  
 And wolde her corouneȝ wern worþe þo fyue  
 If possyble were her mendyng.  
 Bot my Lady, of quom Iesu con spryng,  
 Ho haldeȝ þe empyre ouer vus ful hyȝe ;  
 And þat dyspleseȝ non of oure gyng,  
 For ho is quene of cortaysye.      95

‘ Of courtaysye, as saytȝ Saynt Poule,  
 Al arn we membreȝ of Iesu Kryst ;  
 As heued and arme and legg and naule  
 Temen to hys body ful trwe and t(r)yste,  
 Ryȝt so is vch a Krysten sawle      100  
 A longande lym to þe Mayster of myste  
 Þenne loke what hate oþer any gawle  
 Is tached oþer ȝyȝed þy lymmeȝ bytwyste :  
 þy heued hatȝ nauþer greme ne gryste  
 On arme oþer synger þaȝ þou ber byȝe :      105  
 So fare we alle wyth luf and lyste  
 To kyng and quene by cortaysye.’

‘ Cortaysé,’ quod I, ‘ I leue,  
 And charyté grete, be yow among,  
 Bot my speche þat yow ne greue,      110

þyself in heuen ouer hyȝ þou heue,

112 a line omitted in MS.

To make þe quen þat watȝ so ȝonge.  
 What more honour moȝte heacheue  
 þat hadē endurēd in worlde stronge,  
 And lyued in penaunce hys lyueȝ longe,  
 Wyth bodyly bale hym blysse to byye ?  
 What more worschyp moȝt he fonge,  
 þen corounde be kyng by cortaysé ?

115

120

‘ That cortaysé is to fre of dede,  
 ȝyf hyt be soth þat þou coneȝ saye ;  
 þou lysed not two ȝer in oure þede ;  
 þou cowþeȝ neuer God nauȝer plese ne pray,  
 Ne neuer nauȝer Pater ne Crede ;  
 And quen mad on þe fyrt day !  
 I may not traw, so God me spedē,  
 þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away ;  
 Of countes, damysel, par ma say !  
 Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,  
 Aþer elleȝ a lady of lasse aray ;  
 Bot a quene !—hit is to dere a date.’

125

130

‘ þer is no date of Hys godnesse,’  
 þen sayde to me þat worþy wyȝte,  
 ‘ For al is trawþe þat He con dresse,  
 And He may do no þynk bot ryȝt,  
 As Mathew meleȝ in your messe,  
 In sothful Gospel of God Almyȝt,  
 In sample he can ful grayþely gesse,  
 And lykneȝ hit to heuen lyȝte :

135

140

“ My regne,” He saytȝ, “ is lyk on hyȝ  
 To a lorde þat hadē a uyne, I wate.  
 Of tyme of ȝere þe terme watȝ tyȝt,  
 To labor vyne watȝ dere þe date.

““ þat date of ȝere wel knawe þys hyne.

þe lorde ful erly vp he ros,

To hyre werkmen to hys vyne,

And syndez þer summe to hys porpos.

Into acorde þay con declyne

For a pené on a day, and forth þay gotz,

150

Wryþen and worchen and don gret pyne,

Keruen and caggen and man hit clos.

Aboute vnder, þe lorde to marked totz,

And ydel men stande he syndez þerate.

‘Why stande ȝe ydel?’ he sayde to þos;

155

‘Ne knawe ȝe of þis day no date?’

““ Er date of daye hider arn we wonne ;”

So watȝ al samen her answar soȝt ;

‘We haf standen her syn ros þe sunne,

160

And no mon byddeȝ vus do ryȝt noȝt.’

‘Gos into my vyne, dotȝ þat ȝe conne,’

So sayde þe lorde, and made hit toȝt ;

‘What resonable hyre be naȝt be runne

I yow pay in dede and þoȝte.’

þay wente into þe vyne and wroȝte,

165

And al day þe lorde þus ȝede his gate,

And nw men to hys vyne he broȝte,

Welneȝ wyl day watȝ passed date.

““ At þe date of day of euensonge,

On oure byfore þe sonne go doun,

170

He seȝ þer ydel men ful stronge,

And saȝde to hem wyth sobre soun :

‘Wy stonde ȝe ydel þise dayeȝ longe?’

þay sayden her hyre watȝ nowhere boun.

‘Gotȝ to my vyne, ȝemen ȝonge,

175

And wyrkeȝ and dotȝ þat at ȝe moun.’

Sone þe worlde bycom wel broun,  
 þe sunne wat<sub>3</sub> doun, and hit wex late ;  
 To take her hyre he mad sumoun ;  
 þe day wat<sub>3</sub> al apassed date.

180

““ The date of þe daye þe lorde con knaw,  
 Called to þe reue : ‘ Lede, pay þe meyny ;  
 Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem owe ;  
 And fyrre, þat non me may reprenē,  
 Set hem alle vpon a rawe,  
 And gyf vchon ilyche a peny ;  
 Bygyn at þe laste þat stande<sub>3</sub> lowe,  
 Tyl to þe fyrste þat þou atteny.’  
 And þenne þe fyrst bygonne to pleny,  
 And sayden þat þay hade trauayled sore :  
 ‘ Pese bot on oure hem con streny ;  
 Vus þynk vus o<sub>3</sub>e to take more.

185

““ More haf we serued, vus þynk so,  
 þat suffred han þe daye<sub>3</sub> hete,  
 þenn þyse þat wro<sub>3</sub> not houre<sub>3</sub> two,  
 And þou dot<sub>3</sub> hem vus to counterfete.’  
 þenne sayde þe lorde to on of þo :  
 ‘ Frende no waning I wyl þe ȝete ;  
 Take þat is þyn owne and go.  
 And I hyred þe for a peny agrete,  
 Quy bygynne<sub>3</sub> þou now to þrete ?  
 Wat<sub>3</sub> not a pené þy couenaunt þore ?  
 Fyrre þen couenaunde is no<sub>3</sub>t to plete.  
 Wy schalte þou þenne ask more ?

195

200

““ More weþer þloulyt is me my gyfste  
 To do wyth myn quat so me lyke<sub>3</sub> ?  
 Oþer elle<sub>3</sub> þyn y<sub>3</sub>e to lyþer is lyfste  
 For I am goude and non byswyke<sub>3</sub> ?

205

173 and] &amp; &amp; MS.

186 ilyche] ilyche MS.

‘Pus schal I,’ quod Kryste, ‘hit skyfste :  
 þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat strykeȝ,  
 And þe fyrst be laste, be he neuer so swyft ;  
 For mony ben calleȝ(d), þaȝ fewe be mykeȝ.’”  
 Pus pore men her part ay pykeȝ,  
 þaȝ þay com late and lyttel wore ;  
 And þaȝ her sweng wyth lyttel atslykeȝ,  
 þe merci of God is much þe more.

210

215

‘More haf I of ioye and blysse hereinne,  
 Of ladyschyp gret and lyueȝ blom,  
 þen alle þe wyȝeȝ in þe worlde myȝt wynne  
 By þe way of ryȝt to aske dome.  
 Wheþer welnygh now I con bygynne—  
 In euentyde into þe vyne I come—  
 Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con mynne,  
 I watȝ payed anon of al and sum.  
 ȝet oþer þer werne þat toke more tom,  
 þat swange and swat for long ȝore,  
 þat ȝet of hyre no þynk þay nom,  
 Paraunter noȝt schal toȝere more.’

220

225

Then more I meled and sayde apert :  
 ‘Me þynk þy tale vnresounable ;  
 Goddeȝ ryȝt is redy and euermore rert,  
 Oþer Holy Wryt is bot a fable ;  
 In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte  
 þat spekeȝ a poynt determynable :  
 “þou quyteȝ vchon as hys desserte,  
 þou hyȝe Kyng ay pretermynable.”  
 Now he þat stod þe long day stable,  
 And þou to payment com hym byfore,  
 þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,  
 And euer þe lenger þe lasse þe more.’

230

235

240

'Of more and lasse in Godes ryche,'  
 þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no ioparde,  
 For þer is vch mon payed ilyche,  
 Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde,  
 For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche ; 245  
 Queþersoeuer He dele nesch oþer harde,  
 He laueþ Hys gyfteþ as water of dyche,  
 Oþer goteþ of golf þat neuer charde.  
 Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard  
 To Hym þat matþ in synne rescoghe ; 250  
 No blysse betþ fro hem reparde,  
 For þe grace of God is gret inoghe.

**243** ilyche] inlyche *MS.*

## VII

# THE GEST HYSTORIALE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TROY ABOUT 1375.

The Fall of Troy was one of the most popular subjects of mediaeval story. Lydgate wrote a *Troy Book* about 1420; fragments of another are attributed to 'Barbour', whose identity with the author of *The Bruce* has been questioned; a third version, anonymous, is known as the *Laud Troy Book*; and Caxton chose as the first work to be printed in English the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (about 1474). More famous than any of these full histories are two single stories detached from the cycle: Jason's Quest of the Golden Fleece, which is admirably told by Gower in the fifth book of his *Confessio Amantis*; and the Love of Troilus and Cressida, which gave a theme both to Chaucer and to Shakespeare.

The *Gest Hystoriare of the Destruction of Troy*, from which our extracts are taken, is a free rendering of the prose *Historia Troiana* finished in 1287 by Guido de Columna (most probably the modern Terranova in Sicily). The translation, which appears to have been made in the North or North-West Midlands in the second half of the fourteenth century, is preserved only in an imperfect fifteenth-century MS. at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. In the Early English Text Society's print, edited by Panton and Donaldson, the text extends to over 14,000 lines.

The table of contents prefixed to the MS. promises '*the nome of the knight þat causet it [sc. the story] to be made, and the nome of hym that translatid it out of Latyn into Englysshe*'; but the extant MS. does not fulfil the promise. The execution suggests a set

task and a journeyman poet. Phrases are repeated carelessly; there is a great deal of padding; the versification is monotonous; and the writer is too often at the mercy of the alliteration to maintain a serious level. Yet he is not a slavish or a dull translator. The more romantic elements of the story, such as the matter of the *Odyssey*, had already been whittled away in his original, and he shows little desire or capacity to restore them. But he knew as well as the Old English poets the forcefulness of alliterative verse in scenes of violence, and describes with unflagging zest and vigour the interminable battles of the siege, and storms such as that which wrecked the fleet of Ajax.

The Prologue is a curious example of the pseudo-critical attitude of the Middle Ages. Homer is despised as a teller of impossible tales, and a partisan of the Greeks,—for Hector is the popular hero of the mediaeval versions. The narratives of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, products of the taste for fictitious history that spread westward from Greek-speaking lands in the fourth and following centuries, are accepted as reliable documents; and Guido de Columna as their authoritative literary interpreter. No mention is made of Benoist de Sainte-Maure, whose *Roman de Troie*, written in French about 1184, served as source to Guido, and, directly or indirectly, as inspiration to the whole body of Western writers who dealt with the 'Matter of Troy'. For these lapses the English translator need not be held responsible. On the merits of Homer, Dares, Dictys, and Guido de Columna, he probably accepted without question the word of his master Guido.

### PROLOGUE.

MAISTUR in magesté, Maker of alle,  
 Endles and on, euer to last !  
 Now, God, of þi grace, graunt me þi helpe,  
 And wysshe me with wyt þis werke for to ende  
 Of aunters ben olde of aunsetris nobill,  
 And slydyn vpon shlepe by slomeryng of age ;

Of stithe men in stoure, strongest in armes,  
 And wisest in wer, to wale in hor tyme,  
 þat ben drepit with deth, and þere day paste,  
 And most out of mynd for þere mecell age. 10  
 Sothe stories ben stoken vp, and straught out of mynde,  
 And swolowet into swym by swiftenes of yeres,  
 For new þat ben now next at our hond,  
 Breuyt into bokes for boldyng of hertes,  
 On lusti to loke with lightnes of wille, 15  
 Cheuyt throughge chaunce and chaungyng of peopull ;  
 Sum tru for to traist, trict in þe ende,  
 Sum feynit o fere and ay false vnder.

Yche wegh as he will warys his tyme,  
 And has lykyng to lerne þat hym list after. 20  
 But olde stories of stithe þat astate helde  
 May be solas to sum þat it segh neuer,  
 Be writyng of wees þat wist it in dede,  
 With sight for to serche of hom þat suet after,  
 To ken all the crafte how þe case felle 25  
 By lokyng of letturs þat lefie were of olde.

Now of Troy for to telle is myn entent euyn,  
 Of the stoure and þe stryffe when it distroyet was.  
 þof fele yeres bene faren syn þe fight endid,  
 And it meuyt out of mynd, myn hit I thinke, 30  
 Alss wise men haue writen the wordes before,  
 Left it in Latyn for lernyng of vs.

But sum poyetis full prist þat put hom þerto  
 With fablis and falshed fayned þere speche,  
 And made more of þat mater þan hom maister were. 35  
 Sum lokyt ouer litle, and lympit of the sothe.  
 Amonges þat menye, to myn hym be nome,  
 Homer was holden haithill of dedis  
 Qwiles his dayes enduret, derrist of other,

## THE DESTRUCTION OF TROY

71

þat with the Grekys was gret, and of Grice comyn.

40

He feynet myche fals was neuer before wroght,

And turnet þe truth, trust ye non other.

Of his trifuls to telle I haue no tome nowe,

Ne of his feynit fare þat he fore with :

How goddes foght in the filde, folke as þai were !

45

And other errours vnable, þat after were knownen,

That poyetis of prise have preuyt vntrew :

Ouyde and othir þat onest were ay,

Virgille þe virtus, verrit for nobill,

Thes dampnet his dedys, and for dull holdyn.

50

But þe truth for to telle, and þe text euyn,

Of þat fight, how it felle in a few yeres,

þat was clanly compilet with a clerke wise,

On Gydo, a gome þat graidly hade soght,

And wist all þe werkes by weghes he hade,

55

That bothe were in batell while the batell last,

And euþer sawte and assembly see with þere een.

Thai wrote all þe werkes wroght at þat tyme

In letturs of þere langage, as þai lernede hade :

Dares and Dyties were duly þere namys.

60

Dites full dere was dew to the Grekys,

A lede of þat lond, and logede hom with,

The tother was a tulke out of Troy selfe,

Dares, þat duly the dedys behelde.

Aither breuyt in a boke on þere best wise,

65

That sithen at a sité somyn were founden,

After, at Atthenes, as aunter besell.

The whiche bokes barely, bothe as þai were,

A Romayn ouerraght, and right hom hymseluyn,

That Cornelius was cald to his kynde name.

70

He translated it into Latyn for likyng to here,

But he shope it so short þat no shalke might

Haue knowlage by course how þe case felle ;

For he brought it so breff, and so bare leuyt,  
 þat no lede might have likyng to loke þerappon ; 75  
 Till þis Gydo it gate, as hym grace felle,  
 And declarerit it more clere, and on clene wise.

In this shall faithfully be founden, to the fer ende,  
 All þe dedis bydene as þai done were :  
 How þe groundes first grew, and þe grete hate, 80  
 Bothe of torfer and tene þat hom tide astur.  
 And here synde shall ye faire of þe felle peopull :  
 What kynges þere come of costes aboue ;  
 Of dukes full doughty, and of derffe erles,  
 That assemblid to þe citie þat sawte to defend ; 85  
 Of þe Grekys þat were gedret how gret was þe nowmber,  
 How mony knightes þere come, and kynges enarmede,  
 And what dukes thedur droghe for dedis of were ;  
 What shippes þere were shene, and shalkes within,  
 Bothe of barges and buernes þat broght were fro Grese ; 90  
 And all the batels on bent þe buernes betwene ;  
 What duke þat was dede through dyntes of hond,  
 Who fallen was in sylde, and how it fore after.  
 Bothe of truse and of trayne þe truthe shalt þu here,  
 And all the ferlies þat fell, vnto the ferre ende. 95

Fro this prologue I passe, and part me þerwith.  
 Frayne will I fer, and fraist of þere werkes,  
 Meue to my mater, and make here an ende.

#### EXPLICIT PROLOGUE.

### THE XXXI BOKE: OF THE PASSAGE OF THE GREKYS FRO TROY (ll. 12463-12547).

Hyt fell thus, by fortune, þe fairest of þe yere  
 Was past to the point of the pale wintur. 100  
 Heruest, with the heite and the high sun,  
 Was comyn into colde, with a course low.

Trees, thurgh tempestes, tynde hade þere leues,  
 And briddes abatid of hor brem songe ;  
 The wynde of the west wackenet aboue,  
 Blowyn full bremly o the brode ythes ;  
 The clere aire ouercast with cloudys full thicke,  
 With mystes full merke mynget with showres.  
 Flodes were felle thurgh sallyng of rayne,  
 And wintur vp wacknet with his wete aire.

105

The gret nauy of the Grekes and the gay kynges  
 Were put in a purpos to pas fro the toune.

Sore longit þo lordis hor londys to se,  
 And dissiret full depely, doutyng no wedur.  
 þai counted no course of the cold stormys,  
 Ne the perellis to passe of the pale windes.  
 Hit happit hom full hard in a hondqwile,  
 And mony of þo mighty to misse of hor purpos.

115

Thus tho lordes in hor longyng laghton þe watur,  
 Shotton into ship mony shene knightes,  
 With the tresowre of þe toune þai token before,  
 Relikes full rife, and miche ranke godes.  
 Clere was the course of the cold flosis,  
 And the firmanent faire, as fell for the wintur.  
 Thai past on the pale se, puld vp hor sailes,  
 Hadyn bir at þere backe, and the bonke leuyt.  
 Foure dayes bydene, and hor du nyghtis,  
 Ful soundly þai sailed with seasonable windes.

120

The fyfth day fuersly fell at the none,  
 Sodonly the softe winde vnsoberty blew ;  
 A myste and a merkenes myngit togedur ;  
 A thonder and a thicke rayne þrubleth in the skewes,  
 With an ugsom noise, noy for to here ;  
 All flasshet in a fire the firmament ouer ;  
 Was no light but a laite þat launchit aboue :  
 Hit skirmyt in the skewes with a skyre low,

125

130

135

Thurgh the claterand clowdes clos to the heuyn,  
As the welkyn shuld walt for wodenes of hete;  
With blastes full bigge of the breme wyndes,  
Walt vp the waghes vpon wan hilles.

140

Stith was the storme, stird all the shippes,  
Hoppit on hegh with heste of the fodes.  
The sea was vnsober, sondrit the nauy,  
Walt ouer waghes, and no way held,  
Depertid the pepull, pyne to behold,  
In costes vnkowthe; cut down þere sailes,  
Ropis al torochit, rent vp the hacches,  
Topcastell ouerturnyt, takelles were lost.  
The night come onone, noye was the more!

145

All the company cleane of the kyng Telamon,  
With þere shippes full shene, and þe shire godis,  
Were brent in the bre with the breme lowe  
Of the leymonde laite þat launchit fro heuyn,  
And euyn drownet in the depe, dukes and other!

150

Oelius Ajax, as aunter befelle,  
Was stad in the storme with the stith windes,  
With his shippes full shene and the shire godes.  
Thrifty and þriuaund, threity and two.  
There were brent on the buerne with the breme low,  
And all the freikes in the flode floterand aboue.

155

160

Hymseluyn in the sea sonkyn belyue,  
Swalprit and swam with swyngyng of armys.  
þet he launchet to lond, and his lyf hade,  
Bare of his body, brefull of water,  
In the slober and the slicche slongyn to londe;  
There he lay, if hym list, the long night ouer,  
Till the derke was done, and the day sprang;  
þare sum of his sort, þat soght were to lond  
And than wonen of waghes, with wo as þai might,

165

166-7 and also 168-9 transposed in MS.

Laited þere lord on the laund-syde,  
If hit fell hym by fortune the fodes to passc. 170

þan found þai the freike in the fome lye,  
And comford hym kyndly, as þere kyd iord;  
With worship and wordes wan hym to fote.  
Bothe sailet hym the fode and the fyne clothes. 175

Thus þere goddes with gremþ with þe Grekes fore,  
Mighty Mynerua, of malis full grete,  
For Telamon, in tene, tid for to pull  
Cassandra the cleane out of hir cloise temple.  
Thus hit fell hom by fortune of a soule ende, 180  
For greuyng þere goddes in hor gret yre.  
Oftsynes men sayn, and sene is of olde,  
þat all a company is cumbrit for a cursed shrewē.

171 hym] hom *MS.*

## VIII

### PIERS PLOWMAN

(1362-1400)

BY WILLIAM LANGLAND

Recent criticism of *Piers Plowman* has done more to weaken the hold of opinions once generally accepted than to replace them by others better founded. It is still most probable that 'Long Will', who is more than once mentioned in the text as the poet, was William Langland. The earliest external evidence of his home and parentage is given in a fifteenth-century note in MS. Dublin D 4. 1, of which both the matter and the vile Latinity bear the stamp of genuineness: 'Memorandum quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond, qui Stacius fuit generosus, et morabatur in Schiptone under Whicwode, tenens domini le Spenser in comitatu Oxon., qui praedictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman.' Shipton-under-Wychwood is near Burford in Oxfordshire. The poem shows familiarity with the Malvern Hills and the streets of London; but it is hard to say how much is fact and how much is fiction in the references to Long Will in the text itself, more especially the description of his London life added as the Sixth Passus in Version C, and reproduced here as the second extract.

Since Skeat's edition for the Early English Text Society, the many manuscripts have been grouped into three main types. The shortest, or A-text, appears from internal evidence to have been written about 1362. The B-text (about 1377) has the most compact manuscript tradition. It is distinguished by considerable additions throughout, and by the reconstruction and expansion of the visions of Dowel, Dobet, Dobest, which make up the second half of the poem. The C-text, the latest and fullest form, appears

to have been completed in the last decade of the fourteenth century.

Until recently it has been assumed that these three versions represent progressive revisions by the author. But Professor Manly has found considerable support for his view that more than one writer—perhaps as many as five—had a share in the work. For the present, judgement on this question, and on the intricate problem of the relations of the different versions, is suspended until the results of a complete re-examination of all the MSS. are available. It would not be surprising to find that even when this necessary work is done differences of opinion on the larger questions remain as acute as ever.

It is impossible in short space to give an outline of the whole work, which describes no less than eleven visions. The structure is loose, and allegory is developed or dropped with disconcerting abruptness, for the writer does not curb his vigorous imagination in the interests of formal correctness.

The first part is the best known. On a May morning the poet falls asleep on the Malvern Hills and sees a 'Field full of Folk', where all classes of men are busy about their occupations, more particularly the nefarious occupations that engage the attention of the moralist. Holy Church explains that a high tower in the Field is the home of Truth; and that a 'deep dale' is the Castle of Care, where Wrong dwells with the wicked. She points out Falseness, who is about to marry Lady Meed (i. e. Reward, whether deserved reward or bribe). Lady Meed and her company are haled before the King, who, with Reason and Conscience as his guides, decides her case, and upholds the plea of Peace against Wrong.

The second vision is prefaced (in the C-text only) by the passage printed as the second selection. The poet falls asleep again, and sees Conscience preaching to the people in the Field. Representatives of the Seven Deadly Sins are vividly described. They are brought to penitence, and all set out in search of Truth. But no one knows the way. A palmer who wears the trophies of many pilgrimages to distant saints is puzzled by their inquiries, for he has never heard of pilgrims seeking Truth. Then Peter the Plowman comes forward and explains the way in allegorical

terms. Here the first extract begins. The second vision closes with a general pardon given by Truth to Piers Plowman in this simple form :

Do wel, and haue wel, and God shal haue þi sowle ;  
And do yuel, and haue yuel, hope þow non other  
But after þi ded-day þe Deuel shal haue þi sowle.

The several visions of the second part make up the lives of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. Piers Plowman is there identified with Christ, and the poem ends with Conscience, almost overcome by sin, setting out resolutely in search of Piers.

First impressions of mediaeval life are usually coloured by the courtly romances of Malory and his later refiners. Chaucer brings us down to reality, but his people belong to a prosperous middle-class world, on holiday and in holiday mood. *Piers Plowman* stands alone as a revelation of the ignorance and misery of the lower classes, whose multiplied grievances came to a head in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It must not be supposed that Langland idealized the labourers. Their indolence and improvidence are exposed as unsparingly as the vices of the rich ; and Piers himself is not so much a representative of the English workman in the fourteenth century as a character drawn straight from the Gospels. Still, such an eager plea for humbleness, simplicity, and honest labour, could not fail to encourage the political hopes of the poor, and we see in John Ball's letter (p. 160) that 'Piers Plowman' had become a catchword among them. The poet himself rather deprecates political action. His satire is directed against the general slackening of the bonds of duty that marked the last years of an outworn system of society. For the remedy of abuses he appeals not to one class but to all : king, nobles, clergy, and workers must model their lives on the pattern of the Gospels.

#### A. FROM THE B-TEXT, PASSUS VI.

Bodleian MS. Laud 581 (about 1400).

THIS were a wikked way, but whoso hadde a gyde  
That wolde folwen vs eche a fote: þus þis folke hem  
menen mened. maine New Complaynt  
Quatȝ Perkyn þe plouman: 'Bi Seynt Peter of Rome !

I haue an half-acre to erye bi þe heigh way.

Hadde I eried þis half-acre, and sownen it after,  
I woldē wende with ȝow, and þe way teche.'

'Þis were a longe lettynge,' quod a lady in a sklare;

'What sholde we wommen worche þerewhiles?'  
'Somme shal sowe 〈þe〉 sakke,' quod Piers, 'for shedyng  
of þe whete;

And ȝe, louely ladyes, with ȝoure longe fyngres,

þat ȝe han silke and sendal to sowe, whan tyme is,

Chesibles for chapelleynes, cherches to honoure;

Wyues and wydwes wolle and flex spynneth,

Maketh cloth, I conseille ȝow, and kenneth so ȝowre  
douȝtres;

þe nedys and þe naked, nymmeth hede how hii liggeth,

And casteth hem clothes, for so comaundeth Treuthe.

For I shal lene hem lyfledē, but ȝif þe londe faille,

Flesshe and bred, bothe to riche and to pore,

As longe as I lyue, for þe Lordes loue of heuene.

And alle manere of men þat þow mete, and drynke lyb-  
beth,

Helpith hym to worche wiȝliche þat wynneth ȝowre fode.'

'Bi Crist!' quod a knyȝte þo, 'he kenneth vs þe best;

Ac on þe teme trewly tauȝte was I neuere.

Ac kenne me,' quod þe knyȝte, 'and, bi Cryst! I wil assaye.'

'Bi seynt Poule!' quod Perkyn, 'ȝe profre ȝow so faire,

þat I shal swynke, and swete, and sowe for vs bothe,

And oþer laboures do for þi loue al my lyf tyme,

In couenaunt þat þow kepe Holi Kirke and myselue

Fro wastoures and fro wykked men þat þis worlde struyeth;

And go hunte hardiliche to bares and to foxes,

To bores and to brockes þat breketh adown myne heggis,

And go affaite þe faucones wilde foules to kille,

For suche cometh to my croft, and croppeth my whete.'

Curteislich þe knyȝte þanne comȝed þise wordes :

'By my power, Pieres,' quod he, 'I pliȝte þe my treuthe 35  
To fulfille þis forward, þowȝ I fȝste sholde ;  
Als longe as I lyue, I shal þe mayntene.'

'ȝe, and ȝif a poynt,' quod Pieres, 'I preye ȝow of more ;  
Loke ȝe tene no tenaunt, but Treuthe wil assent. 40  
And þowȝ ȝe mowe amercy hem, late Mercy be taxoure,  
And Mekenesse þi mayster, maugr  Medes chekes ; 41  
And þowȝ pore men profre ȝow presentis and ȝiftis,  
Nym it nauȝte, an auenture ȝe mowe it nauȝte deserue ;  
For þow shalt ȝelde it aȝein at one ȝeres ende  
In a ful perillous place, Purgatorie it haite. 45

And mysbede nouȝte þi bondemen, þe better may þow  
spede ;

\* Powȝh he be þyn vnderlynge here, wel may happe in  
heuene.

Pat he worth worthier sette and with more blisse :

*Amice, ascende superius.* 50  
For in charnel atte chirche cherles ben yuel to knowe,  
Or a kniȝte fram a knaue þere,—knowe þis in þin herfe,  
And þat þow be trewe of þi tongue, and tales þat þow  
hatie,

But if þei ben of wisdome or of witte, þi werkmen to  
chaste.

Holde with none harlotes, he here nouȝte her tales,

And nameliche atte mite suche men eschue, 55  
For it ben þe deueles disoures, I do þe vnderstande.

'I assente, bi Seynt Iame !' seyde þe kniȝte þanne,

'Forte worche bi þi wordes þe while my lyf dureth.'

'And I shal apparaile me,' quod Perkyn, 'in pilgrymes  
wise,

And wende with ȝow I wil til we synde Treuthe, 60

And cast on me my clothes, yclouted and hole, mended  
My cokeres and my coffes, for colde of my nailles,

SOUERAIN'S SEED BATTLE

And hange myn hoper at myn hals, in stede of a scrippe. 81  
 A busshel of bredcorne brynge me þerinne, (of. S. þan + now)  
 For I wil sowe it myself; and sithenes wil I wende 65  
 To pylgrymage, as palmers don, pardoun forto haue.  
 Ac whoso helpeth me to erie or sownen here, ar I wende,  
 Shal haue leue, bi owre Lorde, to lese here in heruest, (CE. le +  
 And make hem mery þeremydde, maugré whoso bigruc-  
 cheth it. (S. h. in a tract)  
 And alkyn crafty men, þat konne lyuen in treuthe, 70  
 I shal synden hem fode, þat feithfulliche libbeth.' ..  
 (Dame 'Worche-whan-tyme-is' Pieres wylf hiȝte;  
 His douȝter hiȝte 'Do-riȝte-so- or-þi-dame-shal-þe-bete';  
 His sone hiȝte 'Suffre-þi-souereynes- to-hauen-her-wille-,  
 Deme-hem-houȝte-, for-, if-þow-doste-, þow-shalt-it-dere-  
 abugge.') 75  
 'Late God yworth with al, for so His worde techeth;  
 For now I am olde and hōre, and haue of myn owen,  
 To penaunce and to pilgrimage I wil passe with þise  
 other. (S. before I will take my will with her).  
 Forþi I wil, or I wende, do wryte my biqueste.  
 In Dei nomine, amen, I make it myseluen. 80  
 He shal haue my soule þat best hath yserued it,  
 And fro þe fende it defende, for so I bileyue,  
 Til I come to His accountes, as my Credo me telleth,  
 To haue a relees and a remissioune on þat rental I leue.  
 þe kirke shal haue my caroigne and kepe my bones, 85  
 For of my corne and cafel he craued þe tythe;  
 I payed it hym prestly, for peril of my soule,  
 Forþy is he holden, I hope, to haue me in his masse,  
 And mengen in his memorie amonge alle Crystene.

My wylf shal haue of þat I wan with treuthe, and nomore,  
 And dele amonge my douȝtres and my dere children; 91  
 For þowgh I deye todaye, my dettes ar quite; (þat is to say, with  
 I bare home þat I borwed, ar I to bedde ȝede. (of. ȝede))

And with þe residue and þe remenaunte, bi þe rode of  
Lukes 1 of Succa

I wil worshipe þerwith Treuthe bi my lyue, 95  
And ben his pilgryme atte plow, for pore mennes sake.  
My plow-fote shal be my þyk-staf, and picche atwo be  
rotes, And helpe my culter to kerue, and clende be forwes.

Now is Perkyn and his pilgrymes to þe plowe faren; go  
To erie þis halue-acre holbyn hym manye. 100  
Dikeres and delueres digged vp þe balkes;  
þerewith was Perkyn apayed, and preyed hem faste.  
Other werkemen þere were þat wrouȝten ful þerne; 105  
Eche man in his manere made hymself to done,  
And some, to plese Perkyn, piked vp þe wedes.  
At heighe pryme Peres lete þe plowe stonde,

To ouersen hem hymself, and whoso best wrouȝte  
He shulde be huyred þerafter whan heruest-tyme come.  
And þanne seten somme and songen atte <sup>501</sup>nale,  
And hulpen erie his half-acre with 'howl trollilolli !'  
'Now, bi þe peril of my soule !' quod Pieres, al in pure  
tene, anger (<sup>502</sup>charis, <sup>503</sup>þrayer) basin, (<sup>504</sup>krabbe)  
'But þe arise þe rather, and rape þow to worche,  
Shal no greyne þat groweth glade þow at nede ;  
And þough þe deye for dole, þe deuel haue þat reccheth !'

Tho were faiourous aferde, and seyned hem blynde; 115  
Somme leyde here legges aliri, as suchedoseles conneth,  
And made her mone to Pieres, and preyde hym of grace:  
'For we haue no lymes to laboure with, lorde, ygraced be ȝe'  
Ac we preye for ȝow, Pieres, and for ȝowre plow bothe,  
Pat God of His grace ȝowre grayne multiplye, 120  
And ȝelde ȝow of ȝowre almesse pat ȝe ȝiue vs here;  
For we may nouȝte swynke ne swete, suche sikenesse vs  
eyleth.' ails

'If it be soth,' quod Pieres, 'þat ȝe seyne, I shal it sone  
asspye. defect < of espion

þe ben wastoures, I wote wel, and Treuthe wote þe sothe,  
 And I am his olde hyne, and hiȝte hym to warne      125  
 Which þei were in þis worlde his werkemen appeyred.  
 þe wasten þat men wynnen with traualle and with tene,  
 Ac Treuthe shal teche ȝow his teme to dryue,  
 Or ȝe shal ete barley bred and of þe broke drynke.  
 But if he be blynde, or broke-legged, or bolted with yrnes,  
 He shal ete whete bred and drynke with myselue,      131  
 Tyl God of his goodnessse amendement hym sende.  
 Ac ȝe myȝte travaille as Treuthe wolde, and take mete and  
 huyre      135

To kepe kyne in þe felde, þe corne fro þe bestes,  
 Diken, or deluen, or dyngȝen vpon sheues.  
 Or helpe make morter, or bere mukke asfelde.      135  
 In lecherye an in losengerye ȝe lyuen, and in sleuthe,  
 And al is þow suffrance þat veniaunce ȝow ne taketh.

Ac ancres and heremytes, þat eten but at nones,  
 And namore er morwe, myne almesse shul þei haue,  
 And of my catel to cope hem with þat han cloistres and  
 cherches.      140

Ac Robert Renne-aboute shal nouȝte haue of myne,  
 Ne posteles, but þey preche conne, and haue powere of  
 þe bisshop;  
 They shal haue Payne and potage, and make hemself at ese,  
 For it is an vnresonable religioun þat hath riȝte nouȝte of  
 certeyne.      145  
 And þanne gan a Wastoure to wrath hym, and wolde haue  
 yfouȝte,

And to Pieres þe plowman he profred his gloue;  
 A Brytonere, a braggere, abosted Pieres als:—  
 ‘Wiltow or neltow, we wil haue owre wille  
 Of þi flowre and of þi flessche, fecche whan vs liketh,      150  
 And make vs myrie þermyde, maugré þi chekis! ’

130 or] and MS.

Thanne Pieres þe plowman pleyned hym to þe knyȝte,  
 To kepe hym, as cokenaunte was, fram cursed shrewes,<sup>end & wold</sup>  
 And fro þis wastoures Wolues-kynnes, þat maketh þe worlde  
 dere: harm (doinjwry te manerind & þis danc)

‘For þo waste, and wynnen nouȝte, and þat ilke while <sup>while</sup> 155  
 Worth neuere plenté amonege þe poeple þerwhile my plow  
 liggeth.’ <sup>þis idde</sup> <sup>at wissian</sup>

Curteisly þe knyȝte þanne, as his kynde wolde,  
 Warned Wastoure, and wissed hym bettere, <sup>directed him (to do) better</sup>  
 ‘Or þow shalt abugge by þe lawe, by þe ordre þat I bere!’

‘I was nouȝt wont to worche,’ quod Wastour, ‘and now  
 wil I nouȝt bigynne’, <sup>þis</sup> 160

And lete liste of þe lawe, and lassé of þe knyȝte,  
 And sette Pieres <sup>at a pees</sup> and his plow bothe, <sup>þis</sup> ✓  
 And manaced Pieres and his men <sup>þis</sup> if þei mette eftsonne.

‘Now, by þe peril of my soule!’ quod Pieres, ‘I shal  
 aþeyre þow alle!’ <sup>at mre</sup>

And houped after Hunger, þat herd hym atte firste: <sup>165</sup>  
 ‘Awreke me of þise wastoures,’ quod he ‘þat þis worlde  
 schendeth!’ <sup>ruin/destroy < of > spéndan</sup>

Hunger in haste þo hent Wastour bi þe mawe, <sup>þis & 02 mige</sup>  
 And wronge hym so bi þe wombe þat bothe his eyen  
 wattered.

‘He buffeted þe Britoner aboute þe chekes,  
 þat he loked like a lanterne al his lyf after. <sup>170</sup>  
 He bette hem <sup>al</sup> so bothe, he barste nere here guttes; <sup>þis</sup> <sup>al</sup>  
 Ne hadde Pieres with a pese-lof preyed Hunger to cesse,  
 They hadde beh <sup>deaf and</sup> doluen bothe, ne dcme þow non other.

‘Suffre hem lyue,’ he seyde ‘and lete hem ete with hogges,  
 Or elles benes and bren ybaken togideres, <sup>175</sup>  
 Or elles melke and mene ale;’ þus preyed Pieres for hem.  
 Faitoures for fere herof flownen into bernes, <sup>þis</sup> barns  
 And flapteþ on with flayles fram morwe til euen,  
 That Hunger was nouȝt so hardy on hem for to loke,

(03. handi)

For a potful of <sup>þer</sup>peses þat Peres hadde ymaked. 180  
 An heep of heremites heftien hem spades,  
 And ketten here cōpes, and courtipies hem made,  
 And wenten as werkemen with spades and with schooules,  
 And doluen and dykeden to dryue aweye Hunger. \*

Blynde and bedreden were botened a housande, 185  
 þat seten to begge sylter; sone were þei heled.  
 For þat was bate for Bayarde was bote for many hungry,  
 And many a beggere for benes buxome was to swynke,  
 And eche a pore man wel apayed to haue pesen for his  
 huyre,  
 And what Pieres preyed hem to do as p̄est as a sperhauke.  
 And þereof was Peres proude, and put hem to werke, 191  
 And ȝaf hem mete as he myȝte asforþ, and mesurable huyre.

Panne hadde Peres pitē, and preyed Hunger to wende  
 Home into his owne ērde, and holden hym þere:  
 'For I am welfawroke now of wastoures, þorw þi myȝte. 195  
 Ac I preye þe, ar þow passe,' quod Pieres to Hunger,  
 'Of beggeres and of bidderes what best be <to> done?  
 For I wote wel, þe þow went, þei wil worche ful ille;  
 For myschief it maketh þei beth so meke nouthe,  
 And for desaute of her fode þis folke is at my wille. 200  
 þey are my blody bretheren,' quod Pieres, 'for God bouȝte  
 vs alle;

Treuthe tauȝte me ones to louye hem vchone,  
 And to helpen hem of alle þinge ay as hem nedeth.  
 And now wolde I witen of þe what were þe best, 204  
 An how I myȝte amastrien hem, and make hem to worche.'

'Here now,' quod Hunger 'and holde it for a wisdome:  
 Bolde beggeres and bigge, þat mowe her bred biswynke,  
 With houndes bred and hors bred holde vp her hertis,  
 Abate hem with benes for bollyng of her wombe;  
 And ȝif þe gomes grucche, bidde hem go swynke, 210  
 And he shal souȝe swettere whan he it hath deseruid. \*

And if þow fynde any freke, þat fortune hath appyred  
 Or any maner fals men, fonde þow suche to cnowe;  
 Conforte hym with þi catel, for Crystes loue of heuene;  
 Loue hem and lene hem, so lawe of God techeth:—

*Alter alterius onera portate.* Dear ye on another's bared  
 And alle maner of men þat þow myȝte asspye  
 That nedȝ ben and nauȝtȝ, helpe hem with þi godis;  
 Loue hem, and lække hem nouȝte; late God take þe  
 veniaunce; Vergeret, þu' i' levet  
 Theigh þeirdone yuel, late þow God aworthe:—

*Michi vindictam, et ego retribuam.*

And if þow wil be graciouse to God, do as þe Gospel  
 techeth, (y)  
 And bilow þe amonges low men; so shalþow lacche grace:—  
*Facite vobis amicos de mamona iniquitatis.*

“I wolde nouȝtȝ greue God,” quod Piers, ‘for al þe good  
 on grounde;’

Miȝte I synnelees do as þow seist?’ seyde Pieres þanne.  
 ‘þe, I billote þe,’ quod Hunger, ‘or ellis þe Bible lieth;  
 Go to Genesis þe gyaunt, þe engendroure of vs alle:—  
 “In sudore and swynke þow shalt þi mete tilye,  
 And laboure for þi lyfode,” and so owre Lerde hyȝte.  
 And Sapience seyth þe same, I seigh it in þe Bible:—  
 “Piger pro frigore no felde nolde tilye,  
 And þerfore he shal begge and bidde, and no man bete his  
 hunger.”

Mathew with mannes face mouthed þise wordis:—  
 þat seruus nequam had a nam, and for he wolde nouȝte  
 chaffare, þe goȝtȝ in trads (þe goȝtȝ in þe fassie) 235  
 He had maugré of his maistre for euermore after,  
 And binam (hym) his mnam, for he ne wolde worche,  
 And ȝaf þat mnam to hym þat ten mnames hadde;  
 And with þat he seyde, þat Holi Cherche it herde,  
 “He þat hath shal haue, and helpe þere it nedeth,

And he þat nouȝt hath shal nouȝt haue, and no man hym  
helpe;

And þat he weneth wel to haue, I wil it hym bireue."

Kynde Witt wolde þat eche a wyght wrouȝte,

Or in dykynge, or in deluyng, or trauaillynge in preyeres,

Contemplatyf lyf or actyf lyf, Cryst wolde men wrouȝte. 245

þe Sauter seyth in þe psalme of *Beati omnes*,

þe freke þat fedeth hymself with his feythal laboure,

He is blessed by þe boke, in body and in soule :—

*Labores manuum tuarum, etc.*

‘ȝet I prey ȝow,’ quod Pieres, ‘par charlē! and ȝe kunne

Eny leef of lechecraft, lere it me, my dere. 251

For somme of my seruauntȝ, and myself bothe,

Of al a wyke worche nouȝt, so owre wombe aketh.’

‘I wote wel,’ quod Hunger, ‘what sykenesse ȝow eyleth;

ȝe han maunged ouermuche, and þat maketh ȝow grone. 255

Ac I hote þe,’ quod Hunger, ‘as ȝow þyne hele wilnest,

That þow dynke no day ar þow dyne somwhat.

Ete nouȝt, I hote þe, ar hunger þe take,

And sende þe of his sauce to sauoure with þi lippes;

And kepe some tyl sopertyme, and sitte nouȝt to longe; 260

Arise vp ar appetit haue eten his fulle.

Lat nouȝt Sire Surfaite sitten at þi borde....

And ȝif þow dicte þe þus, I dar legge myne eres

þat Phisik shal his furred hodes for his fode selle,

And his cloke of Calabre, with alle þe knappes of golde, 265

And be sayne, bi my feith, his phisik to lete,

And lerne to laboure with londe, for lyfode is swete;

For morthereres aren mony leches, Lorde hem amende!

þei do men deye þorw here drynkes, ar Destiné it wolde.’

‘By Seynt Poule! quod Pieres, ‘þise aren profitable  
wordis. 270

Wende now, Hunger, whan þow wolt, þat wel be þow  
euere,

For this is a louely lessoun; Lorde it þe forȝelde!

'Byhote God,' quod Hunger, 'hennes ne wil I wende,  
Til I haue dyned bi þis day, and ydroþke bothe.'

'I haue no peny,' quod Peres 'poletes forto bigge,' 275

Ne neyther gees ne grys, but two grēne cheses,

A sewe cruddes and creem, and an hauer-cake,

And two loues of benes and bran ybake for my fauntis;

And yet I sey, by my soule, I haue no salt bacoun

Ne no' kokēney, bi Cryst, coloppes forto maken.' 280

Ac I haue percil, and porclites, and many koleplantes,

And eke a cow and a kalf, and a cart-mare

To drawe afelde my donge þe while þe droughht lasteth.

And bi þis lyfloe we mot lyue til Lammasse tyme;

And bi þat I hope to haue heruest in my croft, 285

And þanne may I diȝte þi dyner as me dere liketh.'

Alle þe pore peple þo peseccoddes setten,

Benes and baken apples þei brouȝte in her lappes,

Chibolles and cheruelles and ripe chries manye,

And profred Peres þis present to plese with Hunger,

Al Hunger eet in hast, and axed after more.

Þanne pore folke for fere fedde Hunger ȝerne

With grene pore and pesen—to poysoun Hunger þei þouȝte.

By þat it neighed nere heruest, newe corne cam to chepynge;

Þanne was folke fayne, and fedde Hunger with þe

best, 295

With good ale, as Glotoun tauȝte, and gerte Hunger go  
slepe.

And þo wolde Wastour nouȝt werche, but wandren aboue

Ne no begger ete bred that benes inne were,

But of coket, or clereinatyn, or elles of clene white

Ne none halpeny ale in none wise drynke, 300

But of þe best and of þe brounest þat in borgh is to selle.

Laboreres þat haue no lande to lyue on but her handes,

Deyned nouȝt to dyne aday nyȝt olde wortes;

May no peny-ale hem paye, ne no pece of bakoun,  
 But if it be fresch flesch, other fische, fryed other bake,<sup>305</sup>  
 And that *chaude* or *plus chaud*, for chillyng of here mawe.  
 And but if he be heighlich huyred, ellis wil he chyde,  
 And þat he was werkman *wrouȝt* waille be tyme;  
 Aȝeines Catones conseille comseth he to iangle:

*Paupertatis onus pacienter ferre memento.* <sup>310</sup>

He greueth hym aȝeines God, and grūccheth aȝeines resoun,  
 And þanne curseth he þe kynge, and al his conseille after,  
 Suche lawes to loke, laboreres to greue.  
 Ac whiles Hunger was her maister, þere wolde none of hem  
 chyde;

Ne stryue aȝeines his statut, so sternaliche he loked. <sup>315</sup>

Ac I warne ȝow, werkemen, wynneth while ȝe mowe,  
 For Hunger hide(r)ward hasteth hym faste,  
 He shal awake with water wastoures to chaste,  
 Ar fyue (ȝere) be fulfilled suche famyn shal aryse,  
 Thorwgh flodes and þourgh soule wederes futes shul faille;  
 And so sayde Saturne, and sent ȝow to warne: <sup>320</sup>  
 Whan ȝe se þe sonne amys, and two monkes hedes,  
 And a mayde haue þe maistrie, and multiplied bi eight,  
 þanne shal Deth withdrawe, and Derthe be Iustice,  
 And Dawe þe Dyker deye for hunger, <sup>325</sup>  
 But if God of his goodnessse graunt vs a trewe.

## B. FROM THE C-TEXT, PASSUS VI, ll. 1-104.

MS. Phillips 8231 (about 1400).

THUS ich awaked, wot God, wanne ich wonede on Cornehulle,  
 Kytte and ich in a cote, cloþed as a lollere,  
 And lytel *ylete* by, leyue me for soþe,  
 Among lollares of London and lewede heremytes;  
 For ich made of þo men as Reson me tauhte. <sup>5</sup>

3 And a lytel ich let by MS.

For as ich cam by Conscience, wit Reson ich mette,  
 In an hote heruest, wenne ich hadde myn hele,  
 And lymes to labore with, and louede wel fare,  
 And no dede to do bote drynke and to slepe :  
 In hele and in vnité on me aposede,

10

Romyng in remembraunce, thus Reson me aratede :—  
 ‘Canstow seruen,’ he seide, ‘oþer syngen in a churche,  
 Oþer coke for my cokers, oþer to þe cart picche,  
 Mowe, oþer mowen, oþer make bond to sheues,  
 Repe, oþer be a repereyue, and aryse erliche,  
 Oþer haue an horne and be haywarde, and liggen 15  
 a nyghtes,

And kepe my corn in my croft fro pykers and þeeues ?  
 Oþer shappe shon oþer cloþes, oþer shep oþer kyn kepe,  
*(H)*eggen oþer harwen, oþer swyn oþer gees dryue,  
 Oþer eny kyns craft þat to þe comune nudeþ,  
 Hem þat bedreden be bylyue to fynde ?’  
 ‘Certes,’ ich seyde, ‘and so me God helpe,  
 Ich am to waik to worche with sykel oþer with sythe,  
 And to long, leyf me, lowe for to stoupe,  
 To worchen as a workeman eny wyle to dure.’  
 ‘Thenne hauest þow londes to lyue by,’ quath Reson, ‘oþer  
 lynage riche

20

That fynden þy fode ? For an hydel man þow semest,  
 A spendour þat spende mot, oþer a spille-tyme,  
 Oþer beggest þy bylyue aboute ate menne hacches,  
 Oþer faitest vpon Frydays oþer feste-dayes in churches,  
 The wiche is lollarene lyf, þat lytel ys preyed  
 þer Rygthfulness rewardeþ ryght as men deserueþ :—

30

*Reddit unicuique iuxta opera sua.*

Oþer þow ert broke, so may be, in body oþer in membre,  
 Oþer ymaymed þow som myshap werby þow myȝt be ex-  
 cused ?’

35

‘Wanne ich ȝong was,’ quath ich, ‘meny ȝer hennes,  
 My fader and my frendes founden me to scole,  
 Tyl ich wiste wyterliche wat Holy Wryt menede,  
 And wat is best for þe body, as þe Bok telleþ,  
 And sykerest for þe soule, by so ich wolle continue. 40  
 And ȝut fond ich neuere, in faith, sytthen my frendes deyden,  
 Lyf þat me lyked, bote in þes longe clothes.  
 Hyf ich by laboure sholde lyue and lyfode deseruen,  
 That labour þat ich lerned best þerwith lyue ich sholde :—

*In eadem uocatione qua uocati estis.*

45

And ich lyue in Londene and on Londen bothe ;  
 The lomes þat ich laboure with and lyfode deserue  
 Ys *Paternoster*, and my *Prymer*, *Placebo* and *Dirige*,  
 And my *Sauter* som tyme, and my *Seuene Psalmes*.  
 Thus ich synge for hure soules of suche as me helpen, 50  
 And þo þat synden me my fode vochen saf, ich trowe,  
 To be wolcome wanne ich come oþerwyle in a monthe,  
 Now with hym and now with hure ; and þusgate ich begge  
 Withoute bagge oþer botel bote my wombe one.  
 And also, moreouer, me þynkeþ, syre Reson, 55  
 Men sholde constreyne no clerke to knauene werkes ;  
 For by lawe of *Leuistic*, þat oure Lord ordeynede,  
 Clerkes þat aren crouned, of kynde vnderstandingyng,  
 Sholde noþer swynke, ne swete, ne swere at enquestes,  
 Ne syghte in no vauntwarde, ne hus fo greue :— 60

*Non reddas malum pro malo.*

For it ben aires of heuene alle þat ben crounede,  
 And in queer in churches Cristes owene mynestres :—

*Dominus pars hereditatis mee ; & alibi : Clementia non  
 constringit.*

Hit bycomeþ for clerkus Crist for to seruen, 65  
 And knaues vncrouned to cart and to worche.

44 þerwith] þerhvit *MS.* 62 alle] and alle *MS.* 63 in churches] and in kirkes *Ilchester MS.*

For shold no clerk be crouned bote yf he ycome were  
 Of franklens and free men, and of folke yweddede.  
 Bondmen and bastardes and beggers children,  
 Thuse bylongeþ to labour, and lordes children sholde seruen,  
 Bothe God and good men, as here degree askeþ ; 71  
 Some to syngē masses, oþer sitten and wryte,  
 Rede and receyue þat Reson ouhte spende ;  
 And sith bondemenne barnes han be mad bisshopes,  
 And barnes bastardes han ben archidekenes, 75  
 And sopers and here sones for seluer han be knyghtes,  
 And lordene sones here laborers, and leid here rentes to  
 wedde,  
 For þe ryght of þes reame ryden aȝens oure enemys,  
 In confort of þe comune and þe kynges worshep,  
 And monkes and moniales, þat mendinauns sholden fynde, 80  
 Han mad here kyn knyghtes, and knyghtfees purchase(d),  
 Popes and patrones poure gentil blod refuseþ,  
 And taken Symondes sone seyntewarie to kepe.  
 Lyf-holynesse and loue han ben longe hennes,  
 And wole, til hit be wered out, or oþerwisc ychaunged. 85  
 Forþy rebuke me ryght nouht, Reson, ich ȝow praye ;  
 For in my conscience ich knowe what Crist wolde þat ich  
 wrouhte.  
 Preyers of (a) parfyt man and penaunce discret  
 Ys þe leueste labour þat oure Lord pleseþ.  
*Non de solo*, ich seide, ‘for soþe *uiuit homo*, 90  
*Nec in pane et pabulo*, þe *Paternoster* witnesseþ :  
*Fiat uoluntas tua* synt ous alle þynges.’  
 Quath Conscience, ‘By Crist! ich can nat see this lyeþ ;  
 Ac it semeth nouht parfytnesse in cytees for to begge,  
 Bote he be obediercer to pryor oþer to mynstre.’ 95  
 ‘That ys soþ,’ ich seide ‘and so ich byknowe  
 That ich haue tynt tyme, and tyme mysspendeþ ;

And þut, ich hope, as he þat ofte haueþ chaffared,  
 þat ay hath lost and lost, and at þe laste hym happed  
 He bouthe suche a bargayn he was þe bet euere, 100

And sette hus lost at a lef at þe laste ende,  
 Suche a wynnynge hym warth þorw wyrdes of hus grace :—

*Simile est regnum celorum thesauro abscondito in agro,  
 et cetera;*

*Mulier que inuenit dragmam, et cetera;*

So hope ich to haue of Hym þat his almyghty 105  
 A gobet of Hus grace, and bygynne a tyme  
 þat alle tymes of my tyme to profit shal turne.'

'Ich rede þe,' quath Reson þo 'rape þe to bygynne  
 þe lyf þat ys lowable and leel to þe soule'—  
 'þe, and continue,' quath Conscience; and to þe churche ich  
 wente. 110

99 laste] latiste MS.

## IX

### MANDEVILLE'S TRAVELS

*Mandeville's Travels* were originally written in French, perhaps in 1356 or 1357. Their popularity was immediate, and Latin and English translations soon appeared. The English texts published show three forms. The first, imperfect, is the text of the early prints. The second, from Cotton MS. Titus C xvi (about 1400-25), was first printed in 1725, and is followed in the editions by Halliwell, 1839 and 1866, and by Hamelius, 1919. The third, from Egerton MS. 1982 (about 1400-25), has been edited for the Roxburghe Club by G. F. Warner, with the French text, and an excellent apparatus. Our selections follow the Cotton MS.

The *Travels* fall into two parts: (i) a description of the routes to the Holy Land, and an account of the Holy Places; (ii) a narrative of travel in the more distant parts of Asia. Throughout the author poses as an eyewitness. But in fact the book is a compilation, made without much regard to time or place. For the first part William de Boldensele, who wrote in 1336 an account of a visit to the Holy Land, is the main source. The second part follows the description of an Eastern voyage written by Friar Odoric of Pordenone in 1330. Other materials from the mediaeval encyclopaedists are woven in, and there is so little trace of original observation that it is doubtful whether the author travelled far beyond his library.

In the preface he claims to be Sir John Mandeville, an Englishman born at St. Albans. The people of St. Albans were driven to desperate shifts to explain the absence of his tomb from their abbey; but until 1798 it was actually to be seen at the church of the Guillemins, Liège, with this inscription:

‘Hic iacet vir nobilis Dom Ioannes de Mandeville, alias dictus

ad Barbam, Miles, Dominus de Campdi, natus de Anglia, medicinae professor, devotissimus orator, et bonorum suorum largissimus pauperibus erogator, qui, toto quasi orbe lustrato, Leodii diem vitae suaे clausit extreum A.D. MCCCLXXII, mensis Nov. die xvii.'

A Liège chronicler, Jean d'Outremeuse (d. 1399), who claims the invidious position of his confidant and literary executor, gives further details: Mandeville was 'chevalier de Montfort en Angleterre'; he was obliged to leave England because he had slain a nobleman; he came to Liège in 1343; and was content to be known as 'Jean de Bourgogne dit à la Barbe'.

Now Jean de Bourgogne, with whom Sir John Mandeville is identified by d'Outremeuse, is known as the writer of a tract on the Plague, written at Liège in 1365. Further, the Latin text of the *Travels* mentions that the author met at Liège a certain 'Johannes ad Barbam', recognized him as a former physician at the court of the Sultan of Egypt, and took his advice and help in the writing of the *Travels*.

Again, in 1322, the year in which Sir John Mandeville claims to have left England, a Johan de Burgoyne was given good reason to flee the country, because a pardon, granted to him the previous year for his actions against the Despensers, was then withdrawn. Curiously enough, a John Mandeville was also of the party opposed to the Despensers.

Nothing has come of the attempts to attach the clues—St. Albans, Montfort, Campdi, the arms on the tomb at Liège—to the English family of Mandeville. It seems likely that 'Sir John Mandeville' was an alias adopted by Jean de Bourgogne, unless both names cover Jean d'Outremeuse. The Epilogue to the Cotton version shows how early the plausible fictions of the text had infected the history of its composition.

It is clear that the English versions do not come from the hand of the writer of the *Travels*, who could not have been guilty of such absurdities as the translation of *montaignes* by 'þe hille of Aygnes' in the Cotton MS. But whoever the author was, he shows a courtesy and modesty worthy of a knight, begging those with more recent experience to correct the lapses of his memory, and remembering always the interests of later travellers, who

might wish to glean some marvels still untold. He might well have pleaded in the fourteenth century that the time had not come when prose fiction could afford to throw off the disguise of truth.

[THE VOIAGE AND TRAVAILE OF SIR  
JOHN MAUNDEVILE, KT.]

British Museum MS. Cotton Titus C xvi (about 1400-25).

From chap. xiv (xviii), f. 65 b.

ETHIOPE is departed in two princypall parties ; and þat is in the Est partie, and in the Meridionall partie, the whiche partie meridionall is clept Moretane. And the folk of þat contree ben blake ynow, and more blake þan in the toþer 5 partie; and þei ben clept Mowres. In þat partie is a well, þat in the day it is so cold þat no man may drynke þereoffe; and in the nyght it is so hoot þat no man may suffre hys hond þerein. And bezonde þat partie, toward the South, to passe by the See Occean, is a gret lond and a gret contrey. But 10 men may not duell þere, for the feruent brennyng of the sonne, so is it passyng hoot in þat contrey.

In Ethiope all the ryueres and all the watres ben trouble, and þei ben somdell salte, for the gret hete þat is þere. And the folk of þat contree ben lyghtly dronken, and han but litill 15 appetyt to mete . . .

In Ethiope ben many dyuerse folk, and Ethiope is clept 'Cusis.' In þat contree ben folk þat han but o foot; and þei gon so blyue þat it is meruaylle; and the foot is so large þat it schadeweth all the body aȝen the sonne, whanne þei wole lye 20 and reste hem.

In Ethiope, whan the children ben ȝonge and lytill, þei ben all ȝalowe; and whan þat þei wexen of age, þat ȝalownesse turneth to ben all blak. In Ethiope is the cytee of Saba.

and the lond of the whiche on of the þre Kynges, þat presented oure Lord in Bethleem, was kyng offe. 25

Fro Ethiope men gon into Ynde be manye dyuerse contreyes. And men clepen the high Ynde 'Emlak'. And Ynde is devyded in þre princypall parties; þat is: the more, þat is a full hoot contree; and Ynde the lesse, þat is a full atempree contrey, þat streccheth to the lond of Medé; and the þridde 30 part, toward the Septentrion, is full cold, so þat for pure cold and contynuell frost the water becometh cristall.

And vpon tho roches of cristall growen the gode dyamandes, þat ben of trouble colour. ȝalow cristall draweth *(to)* colour lyke oylle. And þei ben so harde þat no man may pollysch 35 hem; and men clepen hem 'dyamandes' in þat contree, and 'hameſe' in anoþer contree. Oþere dyamandes men synden in Arabye, þat ben not so gode; and þei ben more broun and more tendre. And oþer dyamandes also men synden in the Ile of Cipre, þat ben ȝit more tendre; and hem men may wel 40 pollische. And in the lond of Macedoyne men synden dyamaundes also. But the beste and the moste precyouse ben in Ynde.

And men synden many tyme harde dyamandes in a masse, þat cometh out of gold, whan men puren it and synen it out 45 of the myne, whan men breken þat masse in smale peces. And sum tyme it happeneth þat men synden summe as grete as a pese, and summe lasse; and þei ben als harde as þo of Ynde.

And all be it þat men synden gode dyamandes in Ynde, 50 ȝit natheles men synden hem more comounly vpon the roches in the see, and vpon hilles where the myne of gold is. And þei growen many togedre, on lytill, another gret. And þer ben summe of the gretnesse of a bene, and summe als grete as an hasell-note. And þei ben square and poynted of here owne 55 kynde, boþe abouen and benethen, withouten worchinge of mannes hond.

And þei growen togedre, male and femele. And þei ben norysscht with the dew of heuene. And þei engendren 60 comounly, and bryngen forth smale children, þat multiplyen and growen all the ȝeir. I haue ofte tymes assayed þat ȝif a man kepe hem with a lityll of the roche, and wete hem with May dew oftesithes, þei schull growe eueryche ȝeir; and the smale wole wexen grete. For right as the syn perl congeleth 65 and wexeth gret of the dew of heuene, right so doth the verray dyamand; and right as the perl, of his owne kynde, taketh roundnesse, right so the dyamand, be vertu of God, taketh squarenesse.

And men schall bere the dyamaund on his left syde; for 70 it is of grettere vertue þanne, þan on the right syde. For the strengthe of here growynge is toward the North, þat is the left syde of the world, and the left partie of man is, whan he turneth his face toward the Est.

And ȝif ȝou lyke to knowe the vertues of þe dyamand, as 75 men may fynden in þe Lapidarye, þat many men knownen noght, I schall telle ȝou, as þei beþonde the see seyn and affermen, of whom all science and all philosophie cometh from.

He þat bereth the dyamand vpon him, it ȝeueth him hardynesse and manhode, and it kepeth the lemes of his body hole. It ȝeueth him victorye of his enemyes, in plee and in werre, ȝif his cause be rightfull; and it kepeth him þat bereth it in gode wytt; and it kepeth him fro strif and ryot, fro euyll sweunes, from sorwes, and from enchauntementes, and from fantasyes 85 and illusiouns of wykked spirites. And ȝif ony cursed wycche or enchauntour wolde bewycche him þat bereth the dyamand, all þat sorwe and myschance schall turne to himself, þorugh vertue of þat ston. And also no wylde best dar assaylle the man þat bereth it on him. Also the dyamand scholde ben 90 ȝouen freely, withouten coueytyng, and withouten byggynge; and þan it is of grettere vertue. And it maketh a man more

strong and more sad aȝenst his enemyes. And it heleth him þat is lunatyk, and hem þat the fend pursueth or trauayleth. And ȝif venom or poysoun be brought in presence of the dyamand, anon it begynneth to wexe moyst, and for to 95 swete.

þere ben also dyamandes in Ynde þat ben clept 'violastres', —for here colour is liche vyolet, or more browne þan the violettes,—þat ben full harde and full precyous. But ȝit sum men loue not hem so wel as the oþere. But in soth to 100 me, I wolde louen hem als moche as þe oþere; for I haue seen hem assayed. Also þere is anoþer maner of dyamandes þat ben als white as cristall, but þei ben a lityll more trouble; and þei ben gode and of gret vertue, and all þei ben square and poynted of here owne kynde. And summe 105 ben six squared, summe four squared, and summe þre, as nature schapeth hem.

And þersore whan grete lordes and knyghtes gon to seche worschipe in armes, þei beren gladly the dyamaund vpon hem. I schal speke a litill more of the dyamandes, alþough 110 I tarye my matere for a tyme, to þat ende þat þei þat knowen hem not be not disceyued be gabberes þat gon be the contree, þat sellen hem. For whoso wil bye the dyamand, it is nede-full to him þat he knowe hem, because þat men counterfeten hem often of cristall þat is ȝallow; and of saphires of cytryne 115 colour, þat is ȝallow also; and of the saphire loupe; and of many oþer stones. But, I tell ȝou, theise contrefetes ben not so harde; and also the poyntes wil breken lightly; and men may esily pollissche hem. But summe werkmen, for malice, wil not pollische hem, to þat entent to maken men beleue þat þei may 120 not ben pollisscht. But men may assaye hem in this manere: First schere with hem, or write with hem, in saphires, in cristall, or in oþer precious stones. After þat men taken the ademand, þat is the schipmannes ston, þat draweth the nedle to him, and men leyn the dyamand vpon the ademand, and leyn the nedle 125

before the ademand; and ȝif the dyamand be gode and vertuous, the ademand draweth not the nedle to him, whils the dyamand is þere present. And this is the preef þat þei beþonde the see maken. Natheles it besalleth often tyme þat the gode dyamand 130 leseth his vertue, he synne and for incontynence of him þat bereþ it. And þanne is it nedfull to make it to recoueren his vertue aȝen, or ell it is of litill value.

Chap. xxvi (xxx), f. 112 a.

Now schall I seye ȝou sewyngly of contrees and yles þat 135 ben beþonde the contrees þat I haue spoken of. Wherfore I seye ȝou, in passynge be the lond of Cathaye toward the high Ynde, and toward Bacharye, men passen be a kyngdom þat men clepen 'Caldilhe', þat is a full fair contré. And bere groweth a maner of fruyt, as þough it weren gowrdes; 140 and whan þei ben rype, men kutten hem ato, and men synden withinne a lytill best, in flesch, in bon, and blode as þough it were a lytill lamb, withouten wolle. And men eten bothe the frut and the best: and þat is a gret merueylle. Of þat frute I haue eten, allþough it were wondirfull: but þat I knowe wel, 145 þat God is merueylous in his werkes. And natheles I tolde hem of als gret a merueyle to hem, þat is amonges vs: and þat was of the Bernakes. For I tolde hem þat in oure contree weren trees þat baren a fruyt þat becomen briddes fleeynge; and þo þat fallen in the water lyuen; and þei þat fallen on the erthe 150 dyenanon; and þei ben right gode to mannes mete. And hereof had þei als gret meruaylle þat summe of hem trowed it were an impossible thing to be. In þat contré ben longe apples of gode sauour, whereof ben mo þan an hundred in a clustre, and als manye in another: and þei han grete longe leves and 155 large, of two fote long or more. And in þat contree, and in oþer contrees þere abouten, growen many trees, þat beren clowe gylofres, and notemuges, and grete notes of Ynde, and of canell, and of many oþer spices. And þere ben vynes þat beren so grete grapes þat a strong man scholde haue

ynow to done for to bere o clustre with all the grapes. In 160  
 þat same regioun ben the mountaynes of Caspye þat men  
 clepen 'Vber' in the contree. Betwene þo mountaynes the  
 Iewes of ten lynages ben enclosed, þat men clepen Goth and  
 Magoth; and þei mowe not gon out on no syde. þere weren  
 enclosed twenty two kynges with hire peple, þat dwelleden 165  
 betwene the mountaynes of Sy/hye. þere Kyng Alisandre  
 chacede hem betwene þo mountaynes; and þere he thoughte  
 for to enclose hem þorugh werk of his men. But whan he  
 saugh þat he myghte not don it, ne bryng it to an ende, he  
 preyed to God of Nature þat He wolde parfome þat þat he 170  
 had begonne. And all were it so þat he was a payneme,  
 and not worthi to ben herd, ȝit God of His grace closed the  
 mountaynes togydre; so þat þei dwellen þere, all faste  
 ylokked and enclosed with high mountaynes alle aboute, saf  
 only on o syde; and on þat syde is the See of Caspye. Now 175  
 may sum men asken: sith þat the see is on þat o syde, wherfore  
 go þei not out on the see syde, for to go where þat hem lyketh?  
 But to this questioun I schal answere: þat See of Caspye goth  
 out be londe, vnder the mountaynes, and renneth be the desert  
 at o syde of the contree; and after it streccheth vnto the endes 180  
 of Persie. And alþough it be clept a see, it is no see, ne  
 it toucheth to non oþer see; but it is a lake, the grettest of the  
 world. And þough þei wolden putten hem into þat see, þei  
 ne wisten never where þat þei scholde arryuen. And also  
 þei conen no langage but only hire owne, þat no man 185  
 knoweth but þei: and þerfore mowe þei not gon out. And  
 also ȝee schull vnderstonde þat the Iewes han no propre  
 lond of hire owne, for to dwellen inne, in all the wold, but  
 only þat lond betwene the mountaynes. And ȝit þei ȝelden  
 tribute for þat lond to the queen of Amazoine, the whiche þat 190  
 maketh hem to ben kept in cloos full diligently, þat þei schull  
 not gon out on no syde, but be the cost of hire lond. For  
 hire lond marcheth to þo mountaynes. And ofte it hath

befallen þat summe of þe Iewes han gon vp the mountaynes,  
 95 and avaled down to the valeyes: but gret nombre of folk ne  
 may not do so. For the mountaynes ben so hye, and so  
 streght vp, þat þei moste abyde þere, maugree hire myght.  
 For þei mowe not gon out, but be a litill issue þat was  
 made be strengthe of men; and it lasteth wel a four grete  
 200 myle. And after is þere ȝit a lond all desert, where men  
 may fynde no water, ne for dyggynge, ne for non other þing:  
 wherfore men may not dwellen in þat place. So is it full of  
 dragounes, of serpentes, and of oþer venymous bestes, þat no  
 man dar not passe, but ȝif it be strong wynter. And þat  
 205 streyt passage men clepen in þat contree 'Clyron'. And þat  
 is the passage þat the Queen of Amazoine maketh to ben kept.  
 And þogh it happene sum of hem, be fortune, to gon out,  
 þei conen no maner of langage but Ebrew, so þat þei can  
 not speke to the peple. And ȝit natheles, men seyn þei schull  
 210 gon out in the tyme of Antecrist, and þat þei schull maken  
 gret slaughter of Cristene men. And þerfore all the Iewes  
 þat dwellen in all londes lernen allweys to speken Ebrew,  
 in hope þat whan the oþer Iewes schull gon out, þat þei may  
 vnderstonden hire speche, and to ledn hem into Cristendom,  
 215 for to destroye the Cristene peple. For the Iewes seyn þat  
 þei knownen wel be hire prophecyes þat þei of Caspye schull  
 gon out and spreden þorghout all the world; and þat the  
 Cristene men schull ben vnder hire subieccioun als longe as  
 þei han ben in subieccioun of hem. And ȝif þat ȝee wil wyte  
 220 how þat þei schull fynden hire weye, after þat I haue herd  
 seye, I schall tell ȝou. In the tyme of Antecrist, a fox  
 schall make þere his traynet, and mynen an hole, where  
 Kyng Alisandre leet make the ȝates: and so longe he schall  
 225 mynen and percen the erthe, til þat he schall passe þorugh  
 towardes þat folk. And whan þei seen the fox, they schull  
 haue gret merueytle of him, because þat þei saugh neuer  
 such a best. For of all oþere bestes þei han enclosed

amonges hem, saf only the fox. And þanne þei schulle  
 chacen him and pursuen him so streyte, till þat he come to  
 the same place þat he cam fro. And þanne þei schulle 230  
 dyggen and mynen so strongly, till þat þei fynden the ȝates  
 þat King Alisandre leet make of grete stones and passyng  
 huge, wel symmented and made stronge for the maystrie. And  
 þo ȝates þei schull breken, and so gon out, be fyndyng  
 of þat issue.

235

Fro þat lond gon men toward the lond of Bacharie, where  
 ben full yuele folk and full cruell. In þat lond ben trees þat  
 beren wolle, as þogh it were of scheep; whereof men maken  
 clothes, and all þing þat may ben made of wolle. In þat  
 contree ben many ipotaynes, þat dwellen som tyme in the 240  
 water, and somtyme on the lond: and þei ben half man and  
 half hors, as I haue seyd before; and þei eten men, whan þei  
 may take hem. And þere ben ryueres and watres þat ben  
 fulle bytttere, þree sithes more þan is the water of the see. In  
 þat contré ben many griffounes, more plentee þan in ony 245  
 other contree. Sum men seyn þat þei han the body vpward  
 as an egle, and benethe as a lyoun: and treuly þei seyn soþ  
 þat þei ben of þat schapp. But o griffoun hath the body more  
 gret, and is more strong, þanne eight lyouns, of suche lyouns  
 as ben o this half; and more gret and strongere þan an 250  
 hundred egles, suche as we han amonges vs. For o griffoun  
 þere wil bere fleynge to his nest a gret hors, ȝif he may fynde  
 him at the poynt, or two oxen ȝoked togidere, as þei gon at the  
 plowgh. For he hath his talouns so longe and so large and grete  
 vpon his feet, as þough þei weren hornes of grete oxen, or of 255  
 bugles, or of kyȝn; so þat men maken cuppes of hem, to drynken  
 of. And of hire ribbes, and of the pennes of hire wengs, men  
 maken bowes full stronge, to schote with arwes and quarell.

From þens gon men be many iourneyes þorugh the lond of  
 Prestre Iohn, the grete emperor of Ynde. And men clepen 260  
 his ȝoyalme the Yle of Pentexoire.

## EPILOGUE.

þere ben manye oþer dyuerse contrees and manye oþer merueyles beþonde, þat I haue not seen: wherfore of hem I can not speke propurly, to tell ȝou the manere of hem.

265 And also in the contrees where I haue ben, ben manye mo dyuersitees of many wondirfull thinges þanne I make mencioun of, for it were to longe thing to deuys ȝou the manere. And þerfore þat þat I haue deuysed ȝou of certeyn contrees, þat I haue spoken of before, I beseche ȝoure worthi 270 and excellent noblesse þat is suffise to ȝou at this tyme. For ȝif þat I deuysed ȝou all þat is beþonde the see, another man peraunter, þat wolde peynen him and trauaylle his body for to go into þo marches for to encerche þo contrees, myghte ben blamed be my wordes, in reherynge manye straunge 275 thinges; for he myghte not seye no thing of newe, in the whiche the hereres myghten hauen ouþer solace or despote or lust or lykyng in the herynge. For men seyn allweys þat newe thinges and newe tydylges ben plesant to here. Wherfore I wole holde me stille, withouten ony more reheryng 280 of dyuersitees or of meruaylles þat ben beþonde, to þat entent and ende þat whoso wil gon into þo contrees, he schall fynde ynowe to speke of, þat I haue not touched of in no wyse.

And ȝee schull vndirstonde, ȝif it lyke ȝou, þat at myn 285 hom comynge I cam to Rome, and schewed my lif to oure holy fadir the Pope, and was assoylded of all þat lay in my conscience, of many a dyuerse greuous poynt, as men mosten nedes þat ben in company, dwellyng amonges so many a dyuerse folk of dyuerse secte and of beleeve, as I haue ben. 290 And amonges all, I schewed hym this trety, þat I had made after informacioun of men þat knewen of thinges þat I had not seen myself; and also of merueyles and customes þat I hadde seen myself, as fer as God wolde ȝeue me grace:

and besoughte his holy fadirhode þat my boke myghte ben examyned and corrected be avys of his wyse and discreet 295 conseill. And oure holy fader, of his special grace, remytted my boke to ben examyned and preued be the avys of his seyd conseill. Be the whiche my boke was preeued for trewe; in so moche þat þei schewed me a boke, þat my boke was examynde by, þat comprehended full moche more be an 300 hundred part; be the whiche the *Mappa Mundi* was made after. And so my boke (all be it þat many men ne list not to ȝeue credence to no þing, but to þat þat þei seen with hire eye, ne be the auctour ne the persone neuer so trewe) is affirmed and preued be oure holy fader, in maner and forme 305 as I haue seyd. \*

And I Iohn Maundevyll knyght aboueseyd, (alþough I be vnworthi) þat departed from oure contrees and passed the see the ȝeer of grace 1322, þat haue passed many londes and manye yles and contrees, and cerched manye full 310 strange places, and haue ben in many a full gode honourable compauncy, and at many a faire dede of armes, all be it þat I dide none myself, for myn vnable insuffisance; and now I am comen hom, mawgree myself, to reste, for gowtes aretykes þat me distreynen, þat diffynen the ende of my labour, aȝenst 315 my will, God knoweth. And þus takynge solace in my wretchede reste, recordynge the tyme passed, I haue fulfilled þeise thinges and putte hem wryten in this boke, as it wolde come into my mynde, the ȝeer of grace 1356 in the 34<sup>th</sup> ȝeer þat I departede from oure contrees. Wherfore I preye to all 320 the rederes and hereres of this boke, ȝif it plese hem, þat þei wolde preyen to God for me, and I schall preye for hem. And alle þo þat seyn for me a *Paternoster*, with an *Aue Maria*, þat God forȝeue me my synnes, I make hem parteneres and graunte hem part of all the gode pilgrymages, 325 and of all the gode dedes þat I haue don, ȝif ony ben to his plesance; and noȝht only of þo, but of all þat euere I schall

do vnto my lyses ende. And I beseche Almyghty God,  
fro whom all godenesse and grace cometh fro, þat He  
330 vouchesaf of His excellent mercy and habundant grace to  
fullsylle hire soules with inspiracioun of the Holy Gost, in  
makynge defence of all hire gostly enemyes here in erthe,  
to hire saluacioun, bothe of body and soule; to worschipe and  
thankynge of Him þat is þree and on, withouten begynnyng  
335 and withouten endyng; þat is withouten qualitee good,  
withouten quantytee gret; þat in alle places is present, and  
all thinges conteynynge; the whiche þat no goodnesse may  
amende, ne non euell empeyre; þat in perfyte Trynytee  
lyueth and regneth God, be alle worldes and be all tymes.  
340 Amen, Amen, Amen. "

# X

## THE BRUCE

WRITTEN IN 1375 BY JOHN BARBOUR.

John Barbour was archdeacon of Aberdeen, an auditor of the Scottish exchequer, and a royal pensioner. Consequently a number of isolated records of his activities have been preserved. In 1364 he was granted a safe-conduct to travel with four students to Oxford. In 1365 and 1368 he had permission to travel through England so that he might study in France. The notices of his journeys, his offices, and his rewards point to a busy and successful life. He died in 1395.

According to Wyntoun, Barbour's works were (1) *The Bruce* ; (2) *The Stewartis Oryginalle* (or *Pedigree of the Stewarts*), now lost ; (3) a *Brut*, which some have identified with extant fragments of a Troy Book (see the prefatory note to No. VII), and others with (2) *The Stewartis Oryginalle*.

*The Bruce* is found in two late MSS., both copied by John Ramsay; the first, St. John's College, Cambridge, MS. G 23, in the year 1487 ; the second, now at the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, in 1489. It has been edited by Skeat for the Early English Text Society, and for the Scottish Text Society. The poem is valuable for the history, more especially the traditional history, of the period 1304-33. Barbour speaks of it as a romance, and the freedom and vividness of the narrative, with its hero-worship of Robert Bruce and Douglas, place it well above the ordinary chronicle. But far from disclaiming historical accuracy, Barbour prides himself that truth well told should have a double claim to popularity :

Storys to rede ar delitabill  
Suppos that thai be nocht bot fabill :  
Than suld storys that suthfast wer,  
And thai war said on gud maner,

Hawe doubill plesance in heryng:  
 The fyrist plesance is the carpyng,  
 And the tothir the suthfastnes,  
 That schawys the thing ryght as it wes.

He did not misjudge the taste of his country, and *The Bruce*, with which the Scottish contribution to English literature begins, long held its place as the national epic of Scotland.

The specimen describes an incident in the unsuccessful siege of Berwick, 1319.

THE BRUCE, Bk. xvii, ll. 593 ff.

St. John's College (Cambridge) MS. G 23 (A. D. 1487).

THAI (that) at the sege lay,  
 Or it wes passit the fift day,  
 Had maid thame syndry apparale  
 To gang eftsonis till assale.  
 Of gret gestis ane sow thai maid  
 That stalward heling owth it had,  
 With armyt men enew tharin,  
 And instrumentis als for to myne.  
 Syndry scassatis thai maid vithall  
 That war weill hyar than the wall,  
 And ordanit als that by the se  
 The tounе suld weill assalȝeit be.

And thai within that saw thame swa  
 So gret apparale schap till ma,  
 Throu Crabbis consale, that ves sle,  
 Ane cren thai haf gert dres vp hye,  
 Rynand on quhelis, that thai mycht bring  
 It quhar neid war of mast helping.  
 And pik and ter als haf thai tane,  
 And lynt (and) hardis, with brynstane,  
 And dry treis that weill wald byrne,  
 And mellit syne athir othir in;

15 Crabbis] Craggis MS.: Crabys MS. Edinburgh.

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10

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20

And gret flaggatis tharof thai maid,  
 Gyrdit with irnebandis braid;  
 Of thai flaggatis mycht mesurit be  
 Till a gret twnnys quantit . 25  
 Thai flaggatis, byrnand in a baill,  
 With thair cren thought thai till availl,  
 And, gif the sow come to the wall,  
 Till lat thame byrnand on hir fall, 30  
 And with ane stark cheyne hald thame thar  
 Quhill all war brint <vp> that ves thar.

Engynys alsua for till cast  
 Thai ordanit and maid redy fast,  
 And set ilk man syne till his ward ; 35  
 And Schir Valter, the gude Steward,  
 With armyt men suld ryde about,  
 And se quhar at thar var mast dout,  
 And succur thar with his menȝhe.

And quhen thai into sic degr   
 Had maid thame for thair assaling,  
 On the Rude-evyn in the dawing,  
 The Inglis host blew till assale. 40  
 Than mycht men with ser apparele  
 Se that gret host cum sturdely.  
 The toune enveremyt thai in hy,  
 And assalit with sa gud will,—  
 For all thair mycht thai set thartill,—  
 That thai thame pressit fast of the toune. 45  
 Bot thai that can thame abandoune  
 Till ded, or than till woundis sare,  
 So weill has thame defendit thare  
 That ledderis to the ground thai slang,  
 And vih stanyss so fast thai dang  
 Thair fais, that feill thai left lyand, 50  
 Sum ded, sum hurt, and sum swavnand. 55

Bot thai that held on fut in hy  
 Drew thame avay deliuerly,  
 And skunnyrrit tharfor na kyn thing,  
 Bot went stoutly till assalyng ; 60  
 And thai abovin defendit ay,  
 And set thame till so harde assay,  
*Quhill* that feill of thame voundit war,  
*And* thai so gret defens maid thar,  
 That thai stytit thair fais mycht. 65  
 Apon sic maner can thai ficht  
 Quhill it wes neir noyne of the day.  
 Than thai without, in gret aray,  
 Pressit thair sow toward the wall ;  
 And thai within weill soyne gert call 70  
 The engynour that takyne was,  
 And gret manans till him mais,  
 And swoir that he suld de, bot he  
 Provit on the sow sic sutelté  
 That he *tosfruschyf* hir ilke deill. 75  
 And he, that has persauit weill  
 That the dede wes neir hym till,  
 Bot gif he mycht fulfill thar will,  
 Thought that he all his mycht vald do :  
 Bendit in gret hy than wes scho, 80  
 And till the sow wes soyn evin set.  
 In hye he gert draw the cleket,  
 And smertly swappit out the stane,  
 That evyn out our the sow is gane,  
 And behynd hir a litill we 85  
 It fell, and than thai cryit hye  
 That war in hir : ‘ Furth to the wall,  
 For dreid~~les~~ it is ouris all.’

63 *Quhill*] How<sup>MS.</sup>  
till *frusche* *MS.*

64 *And*] *þat* *MS.*

75 *tosfruschyf*]

The engynour than deliuerly  
 Gert bend the gyne in full gret hy, 90  
 And the stane smertly swappit out.  
 It flaw *(out)* quhederand with a rout,  
 And fell richt evin befor the sow.  
 Thair hertis than begouth till grow,  
 Bot ȝeit than with thair mychtis all 95  
 Thai pressit the sow toward the wall,  
 And has hir set tharto iuntly.

The gynour than gert bend in hy  
 The gyne, and swappit out the stane,  
 That evin toward the lift is gane, 100  
 And with gret wecht syne duschit doun  
 Richt by the wall, in a randoune,  
 That hyt the sow in sic maner  
 That it that wes the mast summer,  
 And starkast for till stynt a strak, 105  
 In swndir with that dusche he brak.  
 The men ran out in full gret hy,  
 And on the wallis thai can cry  
 That 'thair sow ferryit wes thair !'

Iohne Crab, that had his geir all ȝar, 110  
 In his faggatis has set the fyre,  
 And our the wall syne can thame wyre,  
 And brynt the sow till brandis bair.

With all this fast assalȝeand war  
 The folk without, with felloune ficht ; 115  
 And thai within with mekill mycht  
 Defendit manfully thar stede  
 Intill gret auentur of dede.  
 The schipmen with gret apparale  
 Com with thair schippes till assale, 120  
 With top-castellis warnist weil,

And wicht men armyt intill steill;  
 Thair batis vp apon thair mastis  
 Drawyn weill hye and festnyt fast is,  
 And pressit with that gret atour      125  
 Toward the wall. Bot the gynour  
 Hit in ane hespyne with a stane,  
 And the men that war tharin gane  
 Sum dede, *sum* dosnyt, *(come doun)* vyndland.  
 Fra thine furth durst nane tak vpon hand      130  
 With schippes pres thame to the vall.

But the laiff war assalȝeand all  
 On ilk a syde sa egyrly,  
 That certis it wes gret ferly  
 That thai folk sic defens has maid,      135  
 For the gret myscheif that thai had:  
 For thair wallis so law than weir  
 That a man richt weill with a sper  
 Micht strik ane othir vp in the face,  
 As eir besor tald till ȝow was;      140  
 And feill of thame war woundit sare,  
 And the layf so fast travaland war  
 That nane had tume rest for till ta,  
 Thair aduersouris assailȝeit swa.  
 Thai war within sa straly stad      145  
 That thar wardane with *him* had  
 Ane hundredth men in cumpany  
 Armyt, that wicht war and hardy,  
 And raid about for till se quhar  
 That his folk hardest pressit war,      150  
 Till releif thame that had mister,  
 Com syndry tymes in placis ser  
 Quhar sum of the defensouris war  
 All dede, and othir woundit sare,

Swa that he of his company  
Behufit to leiff thair party;  
Swa that, be he ane cours had maid  
About, *of all the* men he had  
Thair wes levit with him bot ane,  
That he ne had thame left ilkane  
To releve quhar he saw mister.

And the folk that assalȝeand wer  
At Mary-ȝet behevin had  
The barras, and a fyre had maid  
At the drawbrig, and brynt it doun.  
And war thringand in gret foysoun  
Richt in the ȝet, ane fire till ma.  
And thai within gert smertly gu  
Ane to the wardane, for till say  
How thai war set in hard assay.

And quhen Schir Valter Steward herd  
How men sa stratly with thame ferd,  
He gert cum of the castell then  
All that war thar of armyt men,—  
For thar that day assalȝeit nane,—  
And with that rout in hy is gane  
Till Mary-ȝet, and till the wall  
Is went, and saw the myscheif all,  
And vmbethought hym suddantly,  
Bot gif gret help war set in hy  
Tharto, thai suld burne vp the ȝet  
*With the fire he* fand tharat.

Tharfor apon gret hardyment  
He suddanly set his entent,  
And gert all wyde set vp the ȝet,  
And the fyre that he fand tharat

158 of] to MS. the] to MS. 182 With] And MS. he fand  
haffand MS.

With strinth of men he put avay.  
He set hym in full hard assay,  
For thai that war assalȝeand thar  
Pressit on hym with vapnys bair,  
And he defendit with all his mycht. 190

Thar mycht men se a fellowune sicht :  
With staffing, stoking, and striking  
Thar maid thai sturdy defending,  
For with gret strynth of men the ȝet 195  
Thai defendit, and stude tharat,  
Magré thair fais, quhill the nycht  
Gert thame on bath halfis leif the ticht.

## XI

### JOHN WICLIF

D. 1384.

Like Richard Rolle, Wiclif was a Yorkshireman by birth. Of his career at Oxford little is known until 1360, when he is described as 'master of Balliol'. From Balliol he was presented to the living of Fillingham, and, after a series of preferments, he accepted in 1374 the rectory of Lutterworth, which he held till his death in 1384.

Wiclif's life was stormy. His acknowledged pre-eminence as a theologian and doctor in the University did not satisfy his active and combative mind. 'False peace', he said, 'is grounded in rest with our enemies, when we assent to them without withholding; and sword against such peace came Christ to send.' He lacked neither enemies nor the moral courage to withstand them.

At first, under the powerful patronage of John of Gaunt, he entered into controversies primarily political, opposing the right of the Pope to make levies on England, which was already overburdened with war-taxation, and to appoint foreigners to English benefices. On these questions popular opinion was on his side.

He proceeded to attack the whole system of Church government, urging disendowment; rejecting the papal authority, which had been weakened in 1378 by the fierce rivalry of Urban VI and Clement VII; attacking episcopal privileges, the established religious orders, and the abuse of indulgences, pardons, and sanctuary. Still his opinions found a good deal of popular and political support.

Then in 1380 he publicly announced his rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation. From the results of such a heresy his friends could no longer protect him. Moderate opinion became alarmed and conservative after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Richard II was no friend of heretics. John of Gaunt, himself unpopular by this time, commanded silence. And in 1382

the secular party in Oxford were compelled, after a struggle, to condemn and expel their favourite preacher and his followers. Wyclif retired to Lutterworth, and continued, until struck down by paralysis in the last days of 1384, to inspire his 'poor preachers'—the founders of the Lollard sect which lived on to join forces with Lutheranism in the sixteenth century—and to develop in a series of Latin and English works the doctrines that later came to be associated with Puritanism.

His authorship is often doubtful. In the interests of orthodoxy the early MSS. of his writings were ruthlessly destroyed, as in the famous bonfire of his works at Carfax, Oxford, in 1411. And his followers included not only the simple folk from whom later the 'poor priests' were recruited, but able University men, trained in his new doctrines, bred in the same traditions, and eager to emulate their master in controversy. So his share in the famous Wyclif Bible (ed. Forshall and Madden, Oxford 1850) is still uncertain. Part of the translation seems to have been made by Nicholas of Hereford, and a later recension is claimed for another Oxford disciple, John Purvey. But Wyclif probably inspired the undertaking, for to him, as to the later Puritans, the word of the Bible was the test by which all matters of belief, ritual, and Church government must be tried; and he was particularly anxious, in opposition to the established clergy and the friars, that laymen should read it in their own language. Contemporaries, friend and foe, ascribe the actual translation to him. John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, who was martyred in 1416 for teaching Wyclif's doctrines, states that Wyclif 'translated all the Bible into English'. Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, is equally positive when he writes to the Pope in 1412 that 'the son of the Old Serpent filled up the cup of his malice against Holy Church by the device of a new translation of the Scriptures into his native tongue'.

The first selection, chapter xv of the *De Officio Pastorali* (ed. Matthew, pp. 429 f.), states the case for translation: see Workman's *Wyclif*, ii. p. 329. In the second (ed. Matthew, pp. 188 ff.) some essential points of Wyclif's teaching are explained.

In abuse of his opponents he maintains the sturdy tradition of controversy that still survives in Milton's prose. The style

is rugged and vigorous; the thought logical and packed close. And it is easy to see the source of his strength. In an age whose evils were patent to all, many reproved this or that particular abuse, but the system as a whole passed unchallenged. Wyclif, almost alone in his generation, had the reasoning power to go to the root of the matter, and the moral courage not only to state fearlessly what, rightly or wrongly, he found to be the source of evil, but to insist on basic reform. It is difficult nowadays, when modern curiosity has made familiar the practice of mining among the foundations of beliefs, society, and government, to realize the force of authority that was ranged against unorthodox reformers in the fourteenth century. If the popular support he received indicates that this force was already weakening, Wyclif must still be reckoned among the greatest of those who broke the way for the modern world.

#### A. THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

*De Officio Pastorali, chap. xv.*

MS. Ashburnham XXVII (15th century).

ANT heere þe freris wiþ þer sautours seyn þat it is heresye to write þus Goddis lawe in English, and make it knowun to lewid men. And fourty signes þat þey bringen for to shewe an heretik ben not wroþy to reherse, for nouȝt groundiþ hem but nygromansye. 5

It semyþ first þat þe wit of Goddis lawe shulde be tauȝt in þat tunge þat is more knowun, for þis wit is Goddis word. Whanne Crist seiþ in þe Gospel þat boþe heuene and eþe shulen passe, but His wordis shulen not passe, He vndirstondith bi His woordis His wit. And þus Goddis wit is Hooly Writ, 10 þat may on no maner be fals. Also þe Hooly Gost ȝaf to apostlis wit at Wit Sunday for to knowe al maner langagis, to teche þe puple Goddis lawe þerby; and so God wolde þat þe puple were tauȝt Goddis lawe in dyuerse tungis. But what man, on Goddis half, shulde reuerse Goddis ordenaunse and 15 His wille?

And for þis cause Seynt Ierom trauelide and translatide þe Bible fro dyuerse tungis into Lateyn, þat it myȝte be aftir translatid to opere tungis. And þus Crist and His apostlis 20 tauȝten þe puple in þat tunge þat was moost knowun to þe puple. Why shulden not men do nou so?

And herfore autours of þe newe law, þat weren apostlis of Iesu Crist, writen þer Gospels in dyuerse tungis þat weren more knowun to þe puple.

25 Also þe worþy reume of Fraunse, notwiþstondinge alle lettingis, haþ translatid þe Bible and þe Gospels, wiþ opere trewe sentensis of doctours, out of Lateyn into Freynsch. Why shulden not Engliȝschemen do so? As lordis of Englund han þe Bible in Freynsch, so it were not aȝenus 30 resoun þat þey hadden þe same sentense in Engliȝsch; for þus Goddis lawe wolde be betere knowun, and more trowid, for onehed of wit, and more acord be bitwixe reumes.

And herfore freris han tauȝt in Englund þe Paternoster in Engliȝsch tunge, as men seyen in þe pley of ȝork, and in 35 many opere cuntreys. Siþen þe Paternoster is part of Matheus Gospel, as clerkis knownen, why may not al be turnyd to Engliȝsch trewely, as is þis part? Specialy siþen alle Cristen men, lerid and lewid, þat shulen be sauyd, moten algatis sue Crist, and knowe His lore and His lif. But þe comyns of 40 Engliȝschmen knownen it best in þer modir tunge; and þus it were al oon to lette siche knowing of þe Gospel and to lette Engliȝschmen to sue Crist and come to heuene.

Wel y woot defaute may be in vntrewe translating, as myȝten haue be many defautis in turnyng fro Ebreu into 45 Greu, and fro Greu into Lateyn, and from o langage into anoþer. But lyue men good lif, and studie many personnes Goddis lawe, and whanne chaungyng of wit is foundun, amende þey it as resoun wole.

Sum men seyn þat freris trauelen, and þer fautours, in þis 50 cause for þre chesouns, þat y wole not aferme, but God woot

wher þey ben soþe. First þey wolden be seun so nedeful to þe Engliſchmen of oure reume þat singularly in her wit layȝ  
þe wit of Goddis lawe, to telle þe puple Goddis lawe on what  
maner euere þey wolden. And þe secound cause herof is  
seyd to stonde in þis sentense: freris wolden lede þe puple in 55  
techinge hem Goddis lawe, and þus þei wolden teche sum,  
and sum hide, and docke sum. For þanne defautis in þer lif  
shulden be lesse knowun to þe puple, and Goddis lawe shulde  
be vntreweliere knowun boþe bi clerkis and bi comyns. þe  
þridde cause þat men aspien stondip in þis, as þey seyn: alle 60  
þes newe ordris dreden hem þat þer synne shulde be knowun,  
and hou þei ben not groundid in God to come into þe chirche;  
and þus þey wolden not for drede þat Goddis lawe were  
knowun in Engliſch; but þey myȝten putte heresye on men  
ȝif Engliſch tooerde not what þey seyden. 65

God moue lordis and bischops to stonde for knowing of  
His lawe!

## B. OF FEIGNED CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

Corpus Christi College (Cambridge) MS. 296 (1375-1400), p. 165.

Of feyned contemplatif lif, of song, of þe Ordynal of  
Salisbury, and of bodey almes and worldly bysynesse of  
prestis; hou bi þes foure þe fend lettip hem fro prechynge  
of þe Gospel.—

First, whanne trewe men techen bi Goddis lawe wit and 5  
reson, þat eche prest owip to do his myȝt, his wit, and his  
wille to preche Cristis Gospel, þe fend blyndip yopcritis to  
excuse hem by feyned contemplatif lif, and to seie þat, siþ it  
is þe beste, and þei may not do boþe togidre, þei ben nedid  
for charit  of God to leue þe prechynge of þe Gospel, and 10  
lyuen in contemplacion.

See nowe þe ypcrisie of þis false seiynge. Crist tauȝt and dide þe beste lif for prestis, as oure feiþ techiþ, siþ He was God and myȝte not erre. But Crist preached þe Gospel, and 15 charged alle His apostilis and disciplis to goo and preche þe Gospel to alle men. þan it is þe beste lif for prestis in þis world to preche þe Gospel.

Also God in þe olde lawe techiþ þat þe office of a prophete is to schewe to þe peple here foule synnys. But eche prest 20 is a prophete bi his ordre, as Gregory seyþ vpon þe Gospellis. þanne it is þe office of eche prest to preche and telle þe synnys of þe peple; and in þis manere schal eche prest be an aungel of God, as Holy Writt seiþ.

Also Crist and Ion Baptist leften desert and precheden þe 25 Gospel to here deþ þersfore; and þis was most charité; for ellis þei weren out of charité, or peierid in charité, þat myȝte not be in hem boþe, siþ þe ton was God, and no man after Crist was holyere þan Baptist, and he synned not for þis prechynge.

Also þe holy prophete Ieromye, halwid in his moder 30 wombe, myȝtte not be excused fro prechynge bi his contemplacion, but chargid of God to preche þe synnes of þe peple, and suffre peyne þersfore, and so weren alle þe prophetis of God.

A Lord! siþ Crist and Ion Baptist and alle þe prophetis of 35 God weren nedid bi charité to come out of desert to preche to þe peple, and leue here sol(it)arie preiere, hou dore we sonnyd heretikys seie þat it is betre to be stille, and preie oure owen sonnyd ordynaunce, þan to preche Cristis Gospel?

Lord! what cursed spirit of lesyngis stiriþ prestis to close 40 hem in stonys or wallis for al here lif, siþ Crist comaundiþ to alle His apostilis and prestis to goo into alle þe world and preche þe Gospel. Certis þei ben opyn foolis, and don pleynly aȝenst Cristis Gospel; and, ȝif þei meyntenen þis error, þei ben cursed of *(God)*, and ben perilous ypcritis and 45 heretikis also. And siþ men ben holden heretikis þat done

ȝenst þe popis lawe, *(and þe beste part of þe popis lawe)* seiþ pleynly þat eche þat comeþ to presthod takiþ þe office of a bedele, or criere, to goo bisore Domesday to crie to þe peple here synnes and vengaunce of God, whi ben not þo prestis heretikis þat leuen to preche Cristis Gospel, and 50 compelle oþere treue men to leue prechynge of þe Gospel? Siþ þis lawe is Seynt Gregoryes lawe, groundid oþynly in Goddis lawe and reson and charité; and oþere lawes of þe peple ben contrarie to Holy Writt and reson and charité, for to meyntene pride and couetise of Anticristis worldly cleriks. 55

But yþocritis allegen þe Gospel,—þat Magdaleyne chees to hereself þe beste part whanne she saat bisiden Cristis feet and herde His word. Soþ it is þat þis meke sittyng and deuout herynge of Cristis wordis was best to Magdeleyne, for sche hadde not office of prechynge as prestis han, siþ sche was 60 a womman, þat hadde not auctorité of Goddis lawe to teche and preche oþynly. But what is þis dede to prestis, þat han expresse þe comaundement of God and men to preche þe Gospel? Where þei wolen alle be wommen in ydelnesse, and suen not Iesu Crist in lif and prechynge þe Gospel, þat 65 He comandip Hymself boþe in þe olde lawe and newe?

Also þis pesible herynge of Cristis word and brennyng loue þat Magdeleyne hadde was þe beste part, for it schal be ende in heuene of good lif in þis world. But in þis *world* þe beste lif for prestis is holy lif in kepynge Goddis hestis, and 70 trewe prechynge of þe Gospel, as Crist dide, and chargid alle His prestis to do *(þe same)*. And þes yþocritis wenen þat here dremys and fantasies of hemself ben contemplacion, and þat prechynge of þe Gospel be actif lif; and so þei menen þat Crist tok þe worse lif for þis world, and nedid alle His prestis 75 to leue þe betre and take þe worse lif; and þus þes fonnyd yþocritis putten error in Iesu Crist. But who ben more heretikis?

66 þe] þo *MS.* 67 pesible] possible *MS.* 69 world] lif *MS.*

Also þes blynde yþocritis alleggen þat Crist biddiþ vs preie  
 80 euermore, and Poul biddiþ þat we preie wiþoute lettynge, and  
 þan we prestis may not preche, as þei seynen falsly. But  
 here þes yþocritis schullen wite þat Crist and Poul vnder-  
 stonden of preiere of holy lif, þat eche man doþ as longe as  
 he dwelliþ in charité; and not of babelynge of lippis, þat no  
 85 man may euere do wiþouten cessyng; for ellis no man in þis  
 world myȝte fulfille þe comaundement of Crist; and þis techiþ  
 Austyn and oþere seynis.

And siþ men þat fulfillen not Goddis lawe, and ben out of  
 charité, ben not acceptid in here preiynge of lippis,—for here  
 90 preiere in lippis is abhomynable, as Holy Writt seiþ bi  
 Salomon,—þes prestis þat prechen not þe Gospel, as Crist  
 biddiþ, ben not able to preie *(God)* for mercy, but disceyuen  
 hemself and þe peple, and dispisen God, and stiren Hym to  
 wrappé and vengaunce, as Austyn and Gregory and oþere  
 95 seynis techen.

And principally þes yþocritis þat han rentes, and worldly  
 lordischipes, and parische chirchis appropriid to hem, aȝenst  
 Holy Writt boþe old and newe, by symonye and lesyngis *on*  
 Crist and His apostelis, for stynkyng gronyngys and abite of  
 100 holynesse, and *for* distroiyng of Goddis oþdynaunce, and *for*  
 singuler profession maade to foolis and, in cas, to fendis of  
 helle,—þes foolis schullen lerne what is actif lif and con-  
 templatif bi Goddis lawe, and þanne þei myȝtten wite þat þei  
 han neiþer þe ton ne þe toïþer, siþ þei chargen more veyn  
 105 statutis *of* synful men, and, in cas, *(of)* deuelys, þan þei  
 chargen þe heste of God, and werkis of mercy, and poyntis  
 of charité. And þe fende blyndiþ hem so moche, þat þei seyn  
 indeede þat þei moten neuere preie to *plesynge* of God, siþ þei  
 vnableben hemself to do þe office of prestis bi Goddis lawe, and  
 110 purposen to ende in here seyned deuacion, þat is blasphemye  
 to God.

98 *on]* & *MS.* 100 *for (1st)]* fro *MS.* 105 *of (1st)]* & *MS.*  
 108 *plesynge]* *preisynge* *MS. altered later.*

Also bi song þe fend lettib men to studie and preche þe Gospel; for siþ manrys wittis ben of certeyn mesure and myȝt, þe more þat þei ben occupied aboute siche manrus song, þe lesse moten þei be sette aboute Goddis lawe. For 115 þis stirib men to pride, and iolit , and oþere synnys, and so vnableþ hem many gatis to vnderstonde and kepe Holy Writt, þat techeþ mekenesse, mornynge for oure synnys and oþere mennus, and stable lif, and charit . And ȝit God in all þe lawe of grace chargiþ not siche song, but deuocion in 120 herte, trewe techynge, and holy spekyng in tonge, and goode werkis, and holy lastynge in charit  and mekenesse. But manrus foly and pride stieþ vp euere more and more in þis veyn nouelrie. •

First men ordeyned songe of mornynge whanne þei weren 125 in prison, for techynge of þe Gospel, as Ambrose, as men seyn, to putte awey ydelnesse, and to be not vnoccupied in goode manere for þe tyme. And þat songe and our(e) acordiþ not, for oure stirib to iolit  and pride, and here stirib to mornynge, and to dwelle lenger in wordis of Goddis lawe. 130 þan were matynys, and masse, and euensong, *placebo* and *dirige*, and comedacion, and matynes of Oure Lady, ordeyned of synful men to be songen wiþ heiȝe criyng, to lette men fro þe sentence and vnderstandyng of þat þat was þus songen, and to maken men wery, and vndisposid to studie 135 Goddis lawe for akyng of hedis. And of schort tyme þanne 〈weren〉 more veyn iapis founden: deschaunt, countre note, and organ, and smale brekyng, þat stirib veyn men to daunsynge more þan 〈to〉 mornynge; and herefore ben many proude lorelis founden and dowid wiþ temperal and worldly 140 lordischipis and gret cost. But þes foolis schulden drude þe scharpe wordis of Austyn, þat scip: 'As oft as þe song likiþ me more þan doþ þe sentence þat is songen, so oft I confesse þat I synne greuously.'

145 And ȝif þes knackeris excusen hem bi song in þe olde lawe,  
seie þat Crist, þat best kepte þe olde lawe as it schulde be  
aftirward, tauȝt not ne chargid vs wiþ sich bodely song, ne ony  
of His apostlis, but wiþ deuocion in herte, and holy lif, and  
trewe prechynge, and þat is ynowþ and þe beste. But who  
150 schulde þanne charge vs wiþ more, oure þe fredom and  
liȝtnesse of Cristis lawe?

And ȝif þei seyn þat angelis heryen God bi song in heuene,  
seie þat we kunnen not þat song; but þei ben in ful victorie  
of here enemys, and we ben in perilous *bataile*, and in þe  
155 valye of wepynge and mornynge; and oure song lettiþ vs  
fro betre occupacion, and stiriþ vs to many grete synnes, and  
to forȝete vs self.

But oure flecshly peple haþ more lykyng in here bodely  
eris in sich knackyng and tateryng, þan in heryng of  
160 Goddis lawe, and spekyng of þe blisse of heuene; for þei  
wolen hire proude prestis and oþere lorelis þus to knacke  
notis for many markis and poundis. But þei wolen not ȝeue  
here almes to prestis and children to lerne and teche  
Goddis lawe. And þus, bi þis nouelrie of song, is Goddis  
165 lawe vnstudied and not kepte, and pride and oþere grete  
synnys meyntenyd.

And þes sonnyd lordis and peple gessen to haue more þank  
of God, and <to> worschipe Hym more, in haldynge vp of  
here owen nouelries wiþ grete cost, þan in lernynge, and  
170 techynge, and meyntenyng of his lawe, and his seruauntis,  
and his ordynaunce. But where is more disceit in feiþ, hope  
and charité? For whanne þer ben fourty or fyfty in a queer,  
þre or foure proude lorellis schullen knacke þe most deuout  
seruyce þat no man schal here þe sentence, and alle oþere  
175 schullen be doumbe, and loken on hem as foolis. And þanne  
strumpatis and þeuyys preisen Sire Iacke, or Hobbe, and  
Williem þe proude clerk, hou smale þei knacken here notis;

and seyn þat þei seruen wel God and Holy Chirche, whanne þei dispisen God in His face, and letten oþere Cristene men of here deuocion and compunction, and stiren hem to worldly 180 vanyté. And þus trewe seruyce of God is lettid, and þis veyn knackyng for oure iolité and pride is preised abouen þe mone.

Also þe Ordynalle of Salisbury lettib moche prechynge of þe Gospel; for folis chargen þat more þan þe maundementis of God, and to studie and teche Cristis Gospel. For ȝif 185 a man faile in his Ordynale, men holden þat grete synne, and reprouen hym þerof faste; but ȝif a preste breke þe hestis of God, men chargen þat litel or nouȝt. And so ȝif prestis seyn here matynes, masse, and euensong astir Salisbury vsse, þei hemself and oþere men demen it is ynowȝ, þouȝ þei neiper 190 preche ne teche þe hestis of God and þe Gospel. And þus þei wenens ȝat it is ynowȝ to fulfille synful mennus ordynaunce, and to leue þe riȝtfullest ordynaunce of God, ȝat He chargid prestis to performe.

But, Lord! what was prestis office ordeyned bi God bifore 195 ȝat Salisbury vss was maad of proude prestis, couteitous and dronkelewe? Where God, ȝat dampneȝ alle ydelnesse, chargid hem not at þe ful wiþ þe beste occupacion for hemself and oþere men? Hou doren synful folis chargen Cristis prestis wiþ so moche nouelrie, and euermore cloute more to, 200 ȝat þei may not frely do Goddis ordynaunce? For þe Lewis in þe olde lawe haden not so manye serymonyes of sacrifices ordeyned bi God as prestis han now riȝtis and reulis maade of synful men. And ȝit þe olde lawe in þes charious customes mosten nedes cesse for fredom of Cristis Gospel. But þis 205 fredom is more don awei bi þis nouelrie þan bi customes of þe olde lawe. And þus many grete axen where a prest may, wiþouten dedly synne, seie his masse wiþouten matynys; and þei demen it dedly synne a prest to fulfille þe ordynaunce of God in his fredom, wiþoute nouelrie of synful men, ȝat lettib 210

prestis fro þe betre occupacion ; as ȝif þei demen it dedly synne to leue þe worse þing, and take þe betre, whanne þei may not do boþe togidre.

And þus, Lord ! þin owen ordynaunce þat þou madist for  
215 þi prestis is holden error, and distroied for þe sonnyd nouelrie  
of synful foolis, and, in cas, of fendis in helle.

But here men moste be war þat vnder colour of þis fredom  
þei ben betre occupied in þe lawe of God to studie it and teche  
it, and not slouȝ ne ydel in ouermuche sleep, and vanyȝe, and  
220 oþer synnes, for þat is þe fendis panter.

See now þe blyndnesse of þes foolis. Þei seyn þat a prest  
may be excused fro seiynge of masse, þat God comaundid  
Himself to þe substance þerof, so þat he here on. But he  
schal not be excused but ȝif he seie matynes and euensong  
225 himself, þat synful men han ordeyned ; and þus þei chargen  
more here owene syndynges þan Cristis comaundement.

A Lord ! ȝif alle þe studie and trauile þat men han now  
abowte Salisbury vss, wiþ multitude of newe costly portos,  
antifeners, graielis, and alle oþere bokis, weren turned into  
230 makynge of biblis, and in studiynge and techynge þerof, hou  
moche schulde Goddis lawe be forþered, and knownen, and  
kept, and now in so moche it is hyndrid, vnstudied, and  
vnkept. Lord ! hou schulden riche men ben excused þat  
costen so moche in grete schapellis, and costly bokis of mannus  
235 ordynaunce, for fame and nobleie of þe world, and wolen not  
spende so moche aboute bokis of Goddis lawe, and for to  
studie hem and teche hem : siþ þis were wiþoute comparison  
þetre on alle siddis, and lyȝttere, and sykerere ?

But ȝit men þat knownen þe fredom of Goddis ordynaunce  
240 for prestis to be þe beste, wiþ grete sorow of herte seyn here  
matynes, masse, and euensong, whanne þei schulden ellis be  
betre occupied, last þei sclaudren þe sike conscience of here  
breþeren, þat ȝit knownen not Goddis lawe. God bryng þes

prestis to þe fredom to studie Holy Writt, and lyue þerafter, and teche it oþer men frely, and to preie as long and as 245 moche as God meueþ hem þerto, and ellis turne to oþere medesful werkis, as Crist and His apostlis diden; and þat þei ben not constreyned to blabre alle day wiþ tongue and grete criyng, as pies and iaies, þing þat þei knownen not, and to peiere here owen soule for defaute of wis deuocion and charité! 250

Also bysynesse of worldly occupacion of prestis lettþ prechynge of þe Gospel, for þei ben so besy *(þer)*aboute, and namely in herte, þat þei þenken litel on Goddis lawe, and han no sauour þerto. And seyn þat þei don þus for hospitalité, and to releue pore men wiþ dedis of charité. But, hou euere 255 men speken, it his for here owen couetise, and lustful lif in mete and drynk and precious cloþis, and for name of þe world in fedynge of riche men; and litel or nouȝt comeþ frely to pore men þat han most nede.

But þes prestis schulden sue Crist in manere of lif and 260 trewe techynge. But Crist leste sich occupacion, and His apostlis also, and weren betre occupied in holy preiere and trewe techynge of þe Gospel. And þis determinacion and ful sentence was ȝouen of alle þe apostlis togidre, whanne þei hadden resceyued þe plenteuous ȝiftis of þe Holy Gost. Lord! 265 where þes worldly prestis *(ben)* wisere þan ben alle þe apostlis of Crist? It semeth þat þei ben, or ellis *(þei ben)* fooles.

Also Crist wolde not take þe kyngdom whan þe puple wolde haue maad Him kyng, as Iones Gospel telleþ. But if it haade be a prestis office to dele aboute þus bodi*(ly)* almes, 270 Crist, þat coude best haue do þis office, wolde haue take þes teinperial goodis to dele hem among poeuere men. But He wolde not do þus, but fley, and took no man of þe apostles wiþ him, so faste He hiede. Lord! where worldly prestis kunnen bettere don þis partinge of worldly goodis *þan* Iesu 275 Crist?

And ȝif þei seyn þat Crist fedde þe puple in desert with bodily almes, manye þousand, as þe Gospel saiþ: þat dide 280 Crist by miracle, to shewe His godhede, and to teche prestes houȝ ȝei schulden fede gostly Cristene men by Goddis word. For so dide Cristis apostoles, and hadde not whereof to do bodily almes, whan ȝei miȝten haue had tresour and iuelis ynowe of kynggis and lordis.

285 Also Peter saiþ in Dedis of Apostlis to a pore man þat to him neijer was gold ne siluer; and ȝit he performede wel þe office of a trewe prest. But oure prestis ben so bysy aboute worldly occupacioun þat ȝei semen bettere bailyues or reues þan gostly prestis of Iesu Crist. For what man is so bysy 290 aboute marchaundise, and oþere worldly doyngis, as ben preostes, þat shulden ben lyȝt of heuenly lif to alle men abouten hem?

But certes ȝei shulde be as bysy aboute studyinge of Goddis lawe, and holy preyer, not of *Famulorum*, but of holy 295 desires, and clene meditacioun of God, and trewe techinge of þe Gospel, as ben laboreris aboute worldly labour for here sustenaunce. And muche more bysie, ȝif ȝei miȝten, for þey ben more holden for to lyue wel, and *(ȝeue)* ensaumple of holi lif to þe puple, and trewe techinge of Holy Writ, þanne þe 300 people is holden to ȝyue hem dymes or offringis or ony bodily almes. And þerfore prestis shulde not leue ensaumple of good lif, and studyinge of Holi Writ, and trewe techinge þerof, ne *(for)* bodily almes, ne for worldly goodis, ne for sauynge of here bodily lif.

305 And as Crist sauede þe world by writynge and techinge of foure Euangelistis, so þe fend casteþ to dampne þe world and prestis for lettynge to preche þe Gospel by þes foure: by feyned contemplacioun, by song, by Salisbury vse, and by worldly bysynes of prestis.

310 God for His mercy styre þes prestis to preche þe Gospel in word, in lif; and be war of Sathanas disceitis. Amen.

## XII

### JOHN GOWER

D. 1408.

John Gower, a Londoner himself, came of a good Kentish family. Chaucer must have known him well, for he chose him as his attorney when leaving for the Continent in 1378, and, with the dedication of *Troilus and Criseyde*, labelled him for ever as 'moral Gower'. Gower's marriage with Agnes Groundolf, probably a second marriage, is recorded in 1398. Blindness came on him a few years later. His will, dated August 15, 1408, was proved on October 24, 1408, so that his death must fall between those two points. By his own wish he was buried in St. Saviour's, Southwark, the church of the canons of St. Mary Overy, to whom he was a liberal benefactor.

On his tomb in St. Saviour's Church, Gower is shown with his head resting on three great volumes, representing his principal works—the *Speculum Meditantis*, the *Vox Clamantis*, and the *Confessio Amantis*.

The *Speculum Meditantis*, or *Mirour de l'Omme*, is a handbook of sins and sinners, written in French.

The *Vox Clamantis*, written in Latin, covers similar ground. Opening with a vision of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, the poet passes in review the faults of the different grades of society—clergy, nobles, labourers, traders, lawyers—and ends with an admonition to the young King Richard II.

In his English work, the *Confessio Amantis*, he expressly abandons the task of setting the world to rights, and promises to change his style henceforth. Now he will sing of Love. The machinery of the poem is suggested by the great source of mediaeval conventions, the *Roman de la Rose*. On a May morning the poet, a victim of love, wanders afield and meets the

Queen of Love (cp. the beginning of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*). She bids him confess to her priest Genius. Genius hears the confession, sustaining with some incongruity the triple rôle of high priest of Love, Christian moralist, and entertainer—for it is he who tells the stories which, woven about the framework of the Seven Deadly Sins, make the real matter of the poem.

The first form of the *Confessio* was completed in 1390. It contains a Prologue in which the suggestion for the poem is ascribed to Richard II, and an Epilogue in his praise. In this version the Queen of Love at parting gives Gower a message for Chaucer :

And gret wel Chaucer whan ye mete,  
As mi disciple and mi poete :  
For in the floures of his youthe  
In sondri wise, as he wel coutre,  
Of ditees and of songes glade,  
The whiche he for mi sake made,  
The lond fulfild is overal.  
Wherof to him in special  
Above alle othre I am most holde.  
Forthi now, in hise daies olde,  
Thow schalt him telle this message,  
That he upon his latere age,  
To sette an ende of alle his werk,  
As he which is myn owne clerk,  
Do make his testament of love,  
As thou hast do thi schrifte above,  
So that mi Court it mai recorde.

In the final form, completed in 1392-3, Richard's name disappears from the Prologue; the dedication to his popular rival, Henry of Lancaster, is made prominent; the eulogy in the Epilogue is dropped; and with it the compliment to Chaucer. Whether this last omission is due to chance, or to some change in the relations between the two poets, is not clear.

In his own day Gower was ranked with Chaucer. His reputation was still high among the Elizabethans; and he has the distinction of appearing as Chorus in a Shakespearian play—*Pericles*—of which his story of *Apollonius of Tyre*, in Bk. viii of the *Confessio*, was the immediate source.

A selection gives a very favourable impression of his work. He has a perfect command of the octosyllabic couplet; an easy

style, well suited to narrative; and a classic simplicity of expression for which the work of his predecessors in Middle English leaves us unprepared. Throughout the whole of the *Confessio Amantis*, more than 30,000 lines, the level of workmanship is remarkable, and almost every page shows some graceful and poetical verses.

Yet the poem as a whole suffers from the fault that Gower tried to avoid:

It dulleth ofte a mannes wit  
To him that schal it aldai rede.

One defect, obvious to a modern reader, would hardly be noticed by his contemporaries: he often incorporates in his poetry matter proper only to an encyclopaedia, such as the discourse on the religions of the world in Bk. v, or that on Philosophy in Bk. vii. Another is more radical: for all his wide reading, his leading ideas lack originality. It is hardly a travesty to say that the teaching of his works amounts to this: 'In the moral world, avoid the Seven Deadly Sins in the five sub-classifications of each; in the political world keep your degree without presuming'. Such a negative and conventional message cannot sustain the fabric of three long poems. Their polished and facile moralizing becomes almost exasperating if it be remembered that the poet wrote when a whole system of society was falling, and falling noisily, about him. Modern taste rejects Gower the moralist and political writer, and his claim to present as apart from historical value rests on the delightful single stories which served as embroidery to his serious themes.

The extracts are taken from the admirable edition by G. C. Macaulay: 'The Works of John Gower', 4 vols., Oxford 1899-1902.

#### A. CEIX AND ALCEONE.

From Bk. iv, ll. 2927 ff.

THIS finde I write in Poesie:  
Ceix the king of Trocinie,  
Hadde Alceone to his wif,  
Which as hire oghne hertes lif

Him loveth ; and he hadde also 5  
 A brother, which was cleped tho  
 Dedalion, and he per cas  
 Fro kinde of man forschape was  
 Into a goshauk of liknesse ;  
 Wheroft the king gret hevynesse  
 Hath take, and thoghte in his corage  
 To gon upon a pelrinage  
 Into a strange regioun,  
 Wher he hath his devocioun  
 To don his sacrifice and preie,  
 If that he mihte in eny weie  
 Toward the goddes finde grace 10  
 His brother hele to pourchace,  
 So that he mihte be reformed  
 Of that he hadde be transformed.  
 15

To this pourpos and to this ende  
 This king is redy for to wende,  
 As he which wolde go be schipe ;  
 And for to don him felaschipe  
 His wif unto the see him broghte,  
 With al hire herte and him besoughte  
 That he the time hire wolde sein  
 Whan that he thoghte come aȝein :  
 ' Withinne,' he seith, ' tuo monthe day.' 25  
 And thus in al the haste he may  
 He tok his leve, and forth he seileth,  
 Wepende and sche hirself beweileth,  
 And torneth hom, ther sche cam fro.  
 30

Bot whan the monthes were ago,  
 The whiche he sette of his comynge,  
 And that sche herde no tydinge,  
 Ther was no care for to seche :  
 Wheroft the goddes to beseche  
 35

Tho sche began in many wise,  
And to Iuno hire sacrificise  
Above alle othre most sche dede,  
And for hir lord sche hath so bede  
To wite and knowe hou that he ferde,  
That Iuno the goddesse hire herde,  
Anon and upon this matiere  
Sche bad Yris hir messagere  
To Sлепes hous that (sc)he schal wende,  
And bidde him that he make an ende,  
Be swevene and schewen al the cas  
Unto this ladi, hou it was.

This Yris, fro the hihe stage  
Which undertake hath the message,  
Hire reyny cope dede upon,  
The which was wonderli begon  
With colours of diverse hewe,  
An hundred mo than men it knewe ;  
The hevene lich unto a bowe  
Sche bende, and so she cam doun lowe,  
The god of Slep wher that sche fond ;  
And that was in a strange lond,  
Which marcheth upon Chymerie :  
For ther, as seith the Poesie,  
The God of Slep hath mad his hous,  
Which of entaille is merveilous.

Under an hell ther is a cave,  
Which of the sonne mai noght have,  
So that noman mai knowe ariht  
The point betwen the dai and nyght :  
Ther is no fyr, ther is no sparke,  
Ther is no dore, which mai charke,  
Wherof an yhe scholde unschette,  
So that inward ther is no lette.

And for to speke of that withoute,  
 Ther stant no gret tree nyh aboute  
 Wher on ther myhte crowe or pie  
 Alihte, for to clepe or crie ;      75  
 Ther is no cok to crowe day,  
 Ne beste non which noise may ;  
 The hell bot al aboute round  
 Ther is growende upon the ground      80  
 Popi, which berth the sed of slep,  
 With othre herbes suche an hep.  
 A stille water for the nones  
 Rennende upon the smale stones,  
 Which hihte of Lethes the rivere,      85  
 Under that hell in such manere  
 Ther is, which ȝifth gret appetit  
 To slepe. And thus full of delit  
 Slep hath his hous ; and of his couche  
 Withinne his chambre if I schal touche,      90  
 Of hebenus that slepi tree  
 The bordes al aboute be,  
 And for he scholde slepe softe,  
 Upon a fethrebed aloste      ..  
 He lith with many a pilwe of doun.      95  
 The chambre is strowed up and doun  
 With svevenes many thousandfold.  
 Thus cam Yris into this hold,  
 And to the bedd, which is al blak,  
 Sche goth, and ther with Slep sche spak,      100  
 And in the wise as sche was bede  
 The message of Iuno sche dede.  
 Ful ofte hir wordes sche reherceth,  
 Er sche his slepi eres perceth ;  
 With mochel wo bot ate laste      105  
 His slombrende yhen he upcaste

And seide hir that it schal be do.

Wherof among a thousand tho  
Withinne his hous that slepi were,  
In special he ches out there

110

Thre, whiche scholden do this dede :  
The ferste of hem, so as I rede,  
Was Morphetis, the whos nature  
Is for to take the figure

Of what persone that him liketh,  
Wherof that he ful ofte entriliketh

115

The lif which slepe schal be nyhte ;  
And Ithecus that other hihte,  
Which hath the vois of every soun,  
The chiefe and the condicioun

120

Of every lif, what so it is :

The thridde suiendo after this  
Is Panthasas, which may transforme  
Of every thing the rihte forme,  
And change it in an other kinde.

125

Upon hem thre, so as I finde,  
Of svevenes stant al thapparence,  
Which other while is evidence,  
And other while bot a iape.

Bot natheles it is so schape,  
That Morpheüs be nyht al one

130

Appiereth until Alceone  
In liknesse of hir housebonde  
Al naked ded upon the stronde,  
And hou he dreynte in special

135

These othre tuo it schewen al :  
The tempeste of the blake cloude,  
The wode see, the wyndes loude,  
Al this sche mette, and sih him dyen ;  
Wherof that sche began to crien,

140

Slepende abedde ther sche lay,  
 And with that noise of hire affray  
 Hir wommen sterteren up aboute,  
 Whiche of here ladi were in doute,  
 And axen hire hou that sche ferde ;  
 And sche, riht as sche syh and herde,  
 Hir swewene hath told hem everydel :  
 And thei it halsen alle wel  
 And sein it is a tokne of goode.

Bot til sche wiste hou that it stode,  
 Sche hath no confort in hire herte,  
 Upon the morwe and up sche sterte,  
 And to the see, wher that sche meite  
 The bodi lay, withoute lette  
 Sche drowh, and whan that sche cam nyh,  
 Stark ded, hise armes sprad, sche syh  
 Hire lord flietende upon the wawe.  
 Wheroft hire wittes ben withdrawe,  
 And sche, which tok of deth no kepe,  
 Anon forth lepte into the depe  
 And wolde have cawht him in hire arm.

This infortune of double harm  
 The goddes fro the hevene above  
 Behielde, and for the trowthe of love,  
 Which in this worthi ladi stod,  
 Thei have upon the salte flod  
 Hire dreinte lord and hire also  
 Fro deth to lyve torned so  
 That thei ben schapen into briddes  
 Swimmende upon the wawe amiddes.  
 And whan sche sih hire lord livende  
 In liknesse of a bridd swimmende,  
 And sche was of the same sort,  
 So as sche mihte do despert,

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Upon the ioie which sche hadde  
 Hire wynges bothe abrod sche spradde,  
 And him, so as sche mai suffise,  
 Beclipte and keste in such a wise,  
 As sche was whilom wont to do :  
 Hire wynges for hire armes tuo  
 Sche tok, and for hire lippes softe  
 Hire harde bile, and so ful ofte  
 Sche sondeth in hire briddes forme,  
 If that sche mihte hirself conforme  
 To do the plesance of a wif,  
 As sche dede in that other lif :  
 For thogh sche hadde hir pouer lore,  
 Hir will stod as it was tofore,  
 And serveth him so as sche mai.

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Wheroft into this ilke day  
 Togedre upon the see thei wone,  
 Wher many a dowhter and a sone  
 Thei bringen forth of briddes kinde ;  
 And for men scholden take in mynde  
 This Alceoun the trewe queene,  
 Hhire briddes git, as it is seene,  
 Of Alceoun the name bere.

## B. ADRIAN AND BARDUS.

From Bk. v, ll. 4937 ff.

To speke of an unkinde man,  
 I finde hou whilom Adrian,  
 Of Rome which a gret lord was,  
 Upon a day as he per cas  
 To wode in his huntinge wente,  
 It hapneth at a soudein wente,

5

After his chace as he poursuieth,  
 Thurgh happ, the which noman eschuieth,  
 He fell unwar into a pet,  
 Wher that it mihte noght be let.  
 The pet was dep and he fell lowe,  
 That of his men non myhte knowe  
 Wher he becam, for non was nyh  
 Which of his fall the meschief syh.

10

And thus al one ther he lay  
 Clepende and criende al the day  
 For socour and deliverance,  
 Til aȝein eve it fell per chance,  
 A while er it began to nyhte,  
 A poore man, which Bardus hilte,  
 Cam forth walkende with his asse,  
 And hadde gadred him a tasse  
 Of grene stickes and of dreie  
 To selle, who that wolde hem beie,  
 As he which hadde no liflode,  
 Bot whanne he myhte such a lode  
 To toune with his asse carie.  
 And as it fell him for to tarie  
 That ilke time nyh the pet,  
 And hath the trusse faste knet,  
 He herde a vois, which cride dimme,  
 And he his ere to the brimme  
 Hath leid, and herde it was a man,  
 Which seide, 'Ha, help hier Adrian,  
 And I wol ȝiven half mi good.'

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The poore man this understod,  
 As he that wolde gladly winne,  
 And to this lord which was withinne  
 He spak and seide, 'If I thee save,  
 What sikernessee schal I have

40

Of covenant, that afterward  
Thou wolt me ȝive such reward  
As thou behihest nou tofore ?'

That other hath his othes swore  
Be hevene and be the goddes alle,      45  
If that it myhte so besalle  
That he out of the pet him broghte,  
Of all the goodes whiche he oghte  
He schal have evene halvendel.

This Bardus seide he wolde wel ;      50  
And with this word his asse anon  
He let untrusse, and therupon  
Doun goth the corde into the pet,  
To which he hath at the ende knet  
A staf, wherby, he seide, he wolde  
That Adrian him scholde holde.      55  
Bot it was tho per chance falle,  
Into that pet was also falle  
An ape, which at thilke throwe,  
Whan that the corde cam doun lowe,      60  
Al sodeinli therto he skipte  
And it in bothe hise armes clipte.  
And Bardus with his asse anon  
Him hath updrawe, and he is gon.  
But whan he sih it was an ape,      65  
He wende al hadde ben a iape  
Of faierie, and sore him dradde :  
And Adrian eftstone gradde  
For help, and cride and preide faste,  
And he eftstone his corde caste ;      70  
Bot whan it cam unto the grounde,  
A gret serpent it hath bewounde,  
The which Bardus anon up drouh.  
And thanne him thoghte wel ynouh

It was fantosme, bot yit he herde The vois, and he therto ansuerde, 'What wiht art thou in Goddes name?	75
'I am,' quod Adrian, 'the same, Whos good thou schalt have evene half.'	
Quod Bardus, 'Thanne a Goddes half The thridde time assaie I schal':	80
And caste his corde forth withal Into the pet, and whan it cam	
To him, this lord of Rome it nam, And therupon him hath adresced,	85
And with his hand ful ofte blessed, And thanne he bad to Bardus hale.	
And he, which understod his tale, Betwen him and his asse, al softe,	
Hath drawe and set him up alofte Withouten harm, al esely.	90
He seith noght ones 'grant merci,' Bot strauhte him forth to the cité, <td></td>	
And let this povere Bardus be. And natholes this simple man	95
His covenant, so as he can, Hath axed; and that other seide,	
If so be that he him umbreide Of oght that hath be speke or do,	
It schal ben venged on him so, That him were betre to be ded.	100
And he can tho non other red, But on his asse aȝein he caste	
His trusse, and hieth homward faste: And whan that he cam hom to bedde,	
He tolde his wif hou that he spedde. Bot finaly to speke oght more	105
Unto this lord he dradde him sore.	

So that a word ne dorste he sein.

And thus upon the morwe aȝein,  
In the manere as I recorde,  
Forth with his asse and with his corde  
To gadre wode, as he dede er,  
He goth ; and whan that he cam ner  
Unto the place where he wolde,  
He hath his ape anon beholde,  
Which hadde gadred al aboute  
Of stickes hiere and there a route,  
And leide hem redy to his hond,  
Wherof he made his trosse and bond.  
Fro dai<sup>o</sup> to dai and in this wise  
This ape þrofrehis servise,  
So that he hadde of wode ynouh.

Upon a time and as he drouh  
Toward the wode, he sih besyde  
The grete gastli serpent glyde,  
Til that sche cam in his presence,  
And in hir kinde a reverence  
Sche hath him do, and forth withal  
A ston mpr briht than a cristall  
Out of hir mouth tofore his weie  
Sche let doun falle, and wente aweie  
For that he schal noght ben adrad.  
Tho was this povere Bardus glad,  
Thonkende God and to the ston  
He goth and takth it up anon,  
And hath gret wonder in his wit  
Hou that the beste him hath aquit,  
Wher that the mannes sone hath failed,  
For whom he hadde most travailed.

Bot al he putte in Goddes hond,  
And torneth hom, and what he sond

Unto his wif he hath it schewed;  
 And thei, that weren bothe lewed,  
 Acorden that he scholde it selle. 145  
 And he no lengere wolde duelle,  
 Bot forth anon upon the tale  
 The ston he profreth to the sale;  
 And riht as he himself it sette,  
 The iueler anon forth fette 150  
 The gold and made his paiement;  
 Theroft was no delaientment.

Thus whan this ston was boght and sold,  
 Homward with ioie manyfold  
 This Bardus goth; and whan he ~~cam~~ 155  
 Hom to his hous and that he ~~nam~~  
 His gold out of his purs, withinne  
 He fond his ston also therinne,  
 Wheroft for ioie his herte pleide,  
 Unto his wif and thus he seide, 160  
 'Lo, hier my gold, lo, hier mi ston!'  
 His wif hath wonder therupon,  
 And axeth him hou that mai be.  
 'Nou, be mi trouthe! I not,' quod he,  
 'Bot I dar swere upon a bok 165  
 That to my marchant I it tok,  
 And he it hadde whan I wente:  
 So knowe I noght to what entente  
 It is nou hier, bot it be grace.  
 Forthi tomorrow in other place 170  
 I wole it sonde for to selle,  
 And if it wol noght with him duelle,  
 Bot crepe into mi purs aȝein,  
 Than dar I saufly swere and sein  
 It is the vertu of the ston.' 175

The morwe cam, and he is gon

To seche aboute in other stede  
 His ston to selle, and he so dede,  
 And lefte it with his chapman there.

Bot whan that he cam elleswhere

180

In presence of his wif at hom,

Out of his purs and that he nom

His gold, he fond his ston withal.

And thus it fell him overal,

Where he it solde in sondri place,

185

Such was the fortune and the grace.

Bot so wel may nothing ben hidd,

That it nys ate laste kidd:

This fame goth aboute Rome

So ferforth that the wordes come

190

To themperour Iustinian;

And he let sende for the man,

And axede him hou that it was.

And Bardus tolde him al the cas,

Hou that the worm and ek the beste,

195

Althogh thei maden no beheste,

His travail hadden wel aquit;

Bot he which hadde a mannes wit,

And made his covenant be mouthe,

And swor thereto al that he couthe,

200

To parte and given half his good,

Hath nou forȝete hou that it stod,

As he which wol no trouthe holde.

This Emperour al that he tolde

Hath herd, and thilke unkindenesse

205

He seide he wolde himself redresse.

And thus in court of iuggement

This Adrian was thanne assent,

And the querele in audience

Declared was in the presence

210

Of themperour and many mo;  
 Wherof was mochel speche tho  
 And gret wondringe among the press.

Bot ate laste natholes  
 For the partie which hath pleigned      215  
 The lawe hath diemed and ordeigned  
 Be hem that were avised wel,  
 That he schal have the halvendel  
 Thurghout of Adrianes good.

And thus of thilke unkinde blod      220  
 Stant the memoire into this day,  
 Wherof that every wys man may  
 Ensamplen him, and take in myngle  
 What schame it is to ben unkinde;  
 Aȝein the which reson debateth,      225  
 And every creature it hateth.

## XIII

### JOHN OF TREVISA'S TRANSLATION OF HIGDEN'S POLYCHRONICON

1387.

Ranulph Higden (d. 1364) was a monk of St. Werburgh's at Chester, and has been doubtfully identified with the 'Randal Higden' who is said to have travelled to Rome to get the Pope's consent to the acting of the Chester miracle plays in English.

His *Polychronicon*, so called because it is the chronicle of many ages, is a compilation covering the period from the Creation to 1352. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was the favourite universal history; and the First Book, which deals with general geography, has still a special interest for the light it throws on the state of knowledge in Chaucer's day.

Two English prose translations are known: Trevisa's, completed in 1387, and modernized and printed by Caxton in 1482; and an anonymous rendering made in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Both are printed, with Higden's Latin, in the edition by Babington and Lumby, Rolls Series, 9 vols., 1865-86.

John of Trevisa was a Cornishman. He was a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, from 1362 to 1365; and was one of those expelled from Queen's College for 'unworthiness' in 1379. He became vicar of Berkeley, and at the request of Sir Thomas Berkeley undertook the translation of the *Polychronicon*. In 1398 he brought to an end another long work, the translation of *Bartholomaeus de Proprietatibus Rerum*, the great encyclopaedia of natural science at this time. He died at Berkeley in 1402.

Trevisa was a diligent but not an accurate or graceful trans-

lator. He rarely adds anything from his own knowledge, though we have an example in the account of the reform of teaching at Oxford while he was there. The interest of his work depends chiefly on the curiosity of some passages in his originals.

### A. THE MARVELS OF BRITAIN.

#### CHAP. xlvi.

MS. Tiberius D. vii (about 1400), f. 39 a.

IN Brytayn buþ hoot welles wel arayed and yhyȝt to þe vse of mankunde. Mayster of þulke welles ys þe gret spyryt of Minerua. Yn hys hous fuyr duyrep alwey, þat neuer chaungeþ into askes, bote þar þe fuyr slakeþ, hyt changeþ 5 ynto stony clottes.

Yn Brytayn buþ meny wondres. Noþeles foure buþ most wondersol. Þe furste ys at Pectoun. Þar bloweþ so strong a wynd out of þe chenes of þe eorþe þat hyt casteþ vp aȝe cloþes þat me casteþ yn. Þe secunde ys at Stonhenge 10 bysydes Salesbury. Þar gret stones and wondur huge buþ arered an hyȝ, as hyt were ȝates, so þat þar semeþ ȝates yset apon oþer ȝates. Noþeles hyt ys noȝt clerlych yknowe noþer parceyuet houȝ and wharfore a buþ so arered and so wonderlych yhonged. Þe þridde ys at Cherdhol. Þer 15 ys gret holwenes vndur eorþe. Oste meny men habbeþ ybe þerynne, and ywalked aboute wiȝynne, and yseye ryuers and streemes, bote nowhar conneþ hy synde non ende. Þe feurþe ys þat reyn ys yseye arered vp of þe hulles, and anon yspronge aboute yn þe feeldes. Also þer ys a gret pond þat 20 conteyneþ þre score ylondes couenable for men to dwelle ynne. Þat pound ys byclypped aboute wiþ six score rooches. Apon euerych rooch ys an egle hys nest; and þre score ryuers eorneþ into þat pound, and non of ham aile eorneþ into þe se, bot on. Þar ys a pound yclosed aboute wiþ a wal 25 of tyyl and of ston. Yn þat pound men wascheþ and baþeþ

wel ofte, and euerych man feeleþ þe water hoot oþer cold ryȝt as a wol hymself. þar buþ also salt welles fer fram þe se, and buþ salt al þe woke long forto Saturday noon, and fersch fram Saturday noon forto Moneday. þe water of þis welles, whanne hyt ys ysoode, turneþ into smal salt, fayr and 30 whyyt. Also þar ys a pond þe water þerof haþ wondur worchyng, for þey al an ost stood by þe pond, and turnede þe face þyderward, þe water wolde drawe *(hem)* vyolentlych toward þe pond, and weete al here cloþes. So scholde hors be drawe yn þe same wyse. Bote ȝef þe face ys awewayward 35 fram þe water, þe water noyeþ noȝt. Þer ys a welle *(þat)* non streem eorneþ þarfram noþer þerto, and ȝet four maner sysch buþ ytake þarynne. þat welle ys bote twenty foot long, and twenty foot brood, and noȝt deop bote to þe kneo, and ys yclosed wiþ hyȝ bankkes in euerych syde. 40

Yn þe contray aboute Wynchestre ys a den. Out of þat den alwey bloweþ a strong wynd, so þat no man may endure for to stonde tofor þat den. þar ys also a pond þat turneþ tre into yre and hyt be þerynne al a ȝer, and so tren buþ yschape into whestones. Also þer ys yn þe cop of an hul 45 a buryel. Euerych man þat comeþ and meteþ þat buriel a schal fynde hyt euene ryȝt of hys oune meeþ; and ȝef a pylgrym oþer eny wery man kneoleþ þerto, anon a schal be al fersch, and of werynes schal he feele non nuy.

Fast by þe Ministre of Wynburney, þat ys noȝt fer fram 50 Bathe, ys a wode þat bereþ moche fruyt. ȝef þe tren of þat wode falle into a water oþer grounde *(þat)* þar ys nyȝ, and lygge þar al a ȝer, þe tren teorneþ ynto stoones.

Vndur þe cité of Chestre eorneþ þe ryuer Dee, þat now todeleþ Engelond and Wales. þat ryuer euerych monthe 55 chaungeþ hys fordes, as men of þe contray telleþ, and leueþ ofte þe chanel. Bote wheþer þe water drawe more toward Engelond oþer toward Wales, to what syde þat hyt be, þat ȝer men of þat syde schal habbe þe wors ende and be ouerset, and

60 þe men of þe oþer syde schal habbe þe betre ende and be at here aboue. Whanne þe water chaungeþ so hys cours, hyt bodeþ such happens. Þis ryuer Dee eorneþ and comeþ out of a lake þat hatte Pimbilmere. Yn þe ryuer ys gret plente of samon. Noþeles in þe lake ys neuer samon yfounde.

## B. THE LANGUAGES OF BRITAIN.

### CHAP. lix.

As hyt ys yknowe houȝ meny maner people buþ in þis ylond, þer buþ also of so meny people longages and tonges. Noþeles Walschmen and Scottes, þat buþ noȝt ymelled wiþ oþer nacions, holdeþ wel nyȝ here furste longage and speche, 5 bote ȝef Scottes, þat were som tyme confederat and wonede wiþ þe Pictes, drawe somwhat after here speche. Bote þe Flemmynges þat woneþ in þe west syde of Wales habbeþ yleſt here strange speche, and spekeþ Saxonlych ynow. Also Englischmen, þeyȝ hy hadde fram þe bygynnnyng þre maner 10 speche, Souþeron, Norþeron, and Myddel speche in þe myddel of þe lond, as hy come of þre maner people of Germania, noþeles by commyxstion and mellyng, furst wiþ Danes and afterward wiþ Normans, in menye þe contray longage ys apeyred, and som vseþ strange wlaffyng, chyteryng, 15 harryng, and garryng grisbittyng. Þis apeyryng of þe burþtonge ys bycause of twey þinges. On ys for chyldern in scole, aȝenes þe vsage and manere of al oþer nacions, buþ compelled for to leue here oun longage, and for to construe here lessons and here þinges a Freynsch, and habbeþ supþe 20 þe Normans come furst into Engelond. Also gentil men children buþ ytauȝt for to speke Freynsch fram tyme þat a buþ yrokked in here cradæl, and conneþ speke and playe wiþ a child hys brouch; and oþlondysch men wol lykne

hamsylf to gentil men, and fondeþ wiþ gret bysynes for to speke Freynsch, for to be more ytold of.

25

[þys manere was moche y-vsed tofore þe furste morcyn, and ys seþthe somdel ychaunged. For Iohan Cornwal, a mayster of gramere, chayngede þe lore in gramercole and construccion of Freynsch into Englysch; and Richard Pencrych lurnede þat manere techyng of hym, and oþer men of Pencrych, so þat 30 now, þe ȝer of oure Lord a þousond þre hondred fourre score . and fyue, of þe secunde kyng Richard after þe Conquest nyne, in al þe gramercoleis of Engelond childern leueþ Frensch, and construeþ and lurneþ an Englysch, and habbeþ þerby avauntage in on syde, and desavauntage yn anoþer. 35 Here avauntage ys þat a lurneþ here gramer yn lasse tyme þan childern wer ȝwoned to do. Disavauntage ys þat now childern of gramercole conneþ no more Frensch þan can here lift heele, and þat ys harm for ham and a scholle passe þe se and trauayle in strange londes, and in meny caas also. 40 Also gentil men habbeþ now moche yleſt for to teche here childern Frensch.] Hyt semeþ a gret wondur houȝ Englysch, þat ys þe burþ-tonge of Englyschmen, and here oune longage and tongue, ys so dyuers of soon in þis ylond; and þe longage of Normandy ys comlyng of anoþer lond, and haþ on maner 45 soon among al men þat spekeþ hyt aryȝt in Engelond. [Noþeles þer ys as meny dyuers maner Frensch yn þe rem of Fraunce as ys dyuers manere Englysch in þe rem of Engelond.]

Also of þe forseyde Saxon tongue, þat ys deled a þre, and ys abyde scarslych wiþ seaw vplondysch men, and ys gret 50 wondur, for men of þe est wiþ men of þe west, as hyt were vnder þe same party of heuene, acordeþ more in sounyng of speche þan men of þe norþ wiþ men of þe souþ. þerfore hyt ys þat Mercii, þat buþ men of myddel Engelond, as hyt were parteners of þe endes, vndurstondeþ betre þe syde 55 longages, Norþeron and Souþeron, þan Norþeron and Souþeron vndurstondeþ eyþer oþer.

Al þe longage of þe Norþhumbres, and specialy at ȝork,  
ys so scharp, slytyng, and frotynge, and vnschape, þat we  
60 Souþeron men may þat longage vnneþe vndurstonde. Y trowe  
þat þat ys bycause þat a buþ nyȝ to strange men and aliens,  
þat spekeþ strangelych, and also bycause þat þe kynges of  
Engelond woneþ alwey fer fram þat contray; for a buþ more  
yturnd to þe souþ contray, and ȝef a goþ to þe norþ contray,  
65 a goþ wiþ gret help and strengthe.

þe cause why a buþ more in þe souþ contray þan in þe norþ  
may be betre cornlond, more people, more noble cyt  s, and  
more profytale hauenes.

## XIV

### POLITICAL PIECES

In the thirteenth century political poems were written chiefly in Latin or French. In the fourteenth century a steadily growing tendency to use English witnesses the increased interest of the people in politics and social questions. The fullest collections are those edited by T. Wright, *Political Songs of England* (John to Edward II), Camden Society, 1839; and *Political Poems and Songs* (Edward III to Richard III), Rolls Series, 2 vols., 1859-61.

The selections A and B are from the poems of Laurence Minot, of which the best edition is the third by J. Hall, Oxford 1914. Minot was a better patriot than a poet, and his boisterous contempt for the Scots and French reflects the spirit of England in the early days of Edward III's greatness.

The empty phrases in which the anonymous piece C abounds do not disguise a note of despair. The long war with France was becoming more and more hopeless. The plague that added to its miseries had carried off Henry, first Duke of Lancaster, in 1361. The Black Prince, to whom the nation looked for guidance, had died in 1376. The inglorious old age of Edward III ended in the following year. But there remained the hope, soon to be falsified, that the boy king Richard II would steer the ship of state to safety.

D is the earliest text of the letter which John Ball addressed to the Essex members of the Great Society of Peasants on the eve of the revolt of 1381. It shows how deep an impression the characters and allegorical form of *Piers Plowman* had made on the oppressed serfs and labourers, and it gives some idea of the vague and incoherent thinking that brought ruin on their enterprise. Ball, who had defied established authority all his

life, was freed from prison by the rebels, became a ringleader, and preached to their assembly on Blackheath a famous sermon with the text :

When Adam dalf, and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?

A few weeks later he was executed by sentence of Lord Chief Justice Tressilian, who had been charged by the King to take vengeance on the rebels.

The distich E sums up briefly the history of a year which turned moderate men against Richard II. A fuller contemporary picture of the events that led to his deposition is found in the alliterative poem *Richard the Redeles* (called *Mum and the Sothsegger* since the discovery of a new fragment) which Skeat attributed, probably wrongly, to the author of *Piers Plowman*.

#### A. ON THE SCOTS (ABOUT 1333).

By LAURENCE MINOT.

MS. Cotton Galba E. ix (about 1425), f. 52 a.

*Now for to tell you will I turn  
Of batayl of Banocburn*

SKOTTES out of Berwik and of Abirdene  
At þe Bannokburn war ȝe to kene ;  
þare slogh ȝe many sakles, als it was sene,  
And now has King Edward wroken it, I wene.

It es wrokin, I wene, wele wurth þe while !  
War ȝit with þe Skottes for þai er ful of gile !

Whare er ȝe Skottes of Saint Iohnes toun ?  
þe boste of ȝowre baner es betin all doun.  
When ȝe bosting will bede, Sir Edward es boune  
For to kindel ȝow care, and crak ȝowre crowne.

He has crakked ȝowre croune, wele worth þe while  
Schame bityde þe Skottes, for þai er full of gile !

5

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Skottes of Striflin war steren and stout,  
Of God ne of gude men had þai no dout.  
Now haue þai, þe pelers, priked obout,  
Bot at þe last Sir Edward rifild þaire rout.

15

He has rifild þaire rout, wele wurth þe while !  
Bot euer er þai vnder bot gaudes and gile.

Rughfute rueling, now kindels þi care ;  
Berebag with þi boste, þi biging es bare ;  
Fals wretche and forsworn, whider wiltou fare ?  
Busk þe vnto Brig, and abide þare.

20

þare, wretche, saltou won, and wery þe while ;  
þi dwelling in Dondé es done for þi gile.

þe Skottes gase in Burghes and betes þe stretes ;  
Al þise Inglis men harmes he hetes ;  
Fast makes he his mone to men þat he metes,  
Bot fone frendes he findes þat his bale betes.

25

Fune betes his bale, wele wurth þe while !  
He vses al threting with gaudes and gile.

30

Bot many man thretes and spekes ful ill  
þat sum tyme war better to be stane-still.  
þe Skot in his wordes has wind for to spill,  
For at þe last Edward shall haue al his will.

He had his will at Berwik, wele wurth þe while !  
Skottes broght him þe kayes,—bot get for þaire gile.

35

## B. THE TAKING OF CALAIS (1347).

BY LAURENCE MINOT.

MS. Cotton Galba E. ix (about 1425), f. 55 b.

*How Edward als þe romance sais  
Held his sege bifor Calais.*

CALAYS men, now mai ȝe care,  
And murniȝng mun ȝe haue to mede ;

Mirth on mold get *ȝe* no mare,  
 Sir Edward sall ken *ȝow* *ȝowre* crede.  
 Whilum war *ȝe* wight in wede  
 To robbing rathly for to ren ;  
 Mend *ȝow* sone of *ȝowre* misdele :  
*ȝowre* care es cumen, will *ȝe* it ken.

5

Kend it es how *ȝe* war kene  
 Al Inglis men with dole to dere.  
 10 *ȝaire* gudes toke *ȝe* al bidene,  
 No man born wald *ȝe* forbere.  
*ȝe* spared noght with swerd ne speȝe  
 To stik *ȝam*, and *ȝaire* gudes to stele.  
 With wapin and with ded of were  
*ȝus* haue *ȝe* wonnen werldes wele.

10

15

Weleful men war *ȝe* iwis,  
 Bot fer on fold sall *ȝe* noght fare :  
 A bare sal now abate *ȝowre* blis  
 And wirk *ȝow* bale on bankes bare.  
 20 He sall *ȝow* hunt, als hund dose *ȝare*,  
*ȝat* in no hole sall *ȝe* *ȝow* hide ;  
 For all *ȝowre* speche will he noght spare,  
 Bot bigges him right by *ȝowre* side.

20

Biside *ȝow* here *ȝe* bare bigins  
 To big his boure in winter-tyde,  
 And all bityme takes he his ines  
 With semly se(r)gantes him biside.  
*ȝe* word of him walkes ful wide—  
 Iesu sauе him fro mischance !  
 25 In bataill dar he wele habide  
 Sir Philip and Sir Iohn of France.

25

30

þe Franche men er fers and fell,  
 And mase grete dray when þai er dight ;  
 Of þam men herd slike tales tell,  
 With Edward think þai sor to fight,  
 Him for to hald out of his right,  
 And do him treson with þaire tales :  
 þat was þaire purpos, day and night,  
 Bi counsail of þe Cardinales.

35

40

Cardinales with hattes rede  
 War fro Calays wele thre myle ;  
 þai toke þaire counsail in þat stede  
 How þai might Sir Edward bigile.  
 þai lended þare bot litill while  
 Till Franche men to grante þaire grace :  
 Sir Philip was funden a file,  
 He fled and saght noght in þat place.

45

In þat place þe bare was blith,  
 For all was funden þat he had soght.  
 Philip þe Valas fled ful swith  
 With þe batail þat he had broght.  
 For to haue Calays had he thoght  
 All at his ledeing, loud or still ;  
 Bot all þaire wiles war for noght :  
 Edward wan it at his will.

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Lystens now, and ȝe may lere,  
 Als men þe suth may vnderstand,  
 þe knighting þat in Calais were  
 Come to Sir Edward sare wepeand.  
 In kirtell one, and swerd in hand,  
 And cried, ‘Sir Edward, þine *(we)* are.  
 Do now, lord, bi law of land  
 ȝi will with vs for euermare’.

60

þe nobill burgase and þe best  
 Come vnto him to haue þaire hire.  
 þe comun puple war ful prest  
 Rapes to bring obout þaire swire.  
 þai said all: 'Sir Philip, oure syre,  
 And his sun, Sir Iohn of France,  
 Has left vs ligand in þe mire,  
 And broght vs till þis doleful dance.

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Our horses þat war faire and fat  
 Er etin vp ilkone bidene;  
 Haue we nowþer conig ne cat  
 þat þai ne er etin, and hundes keþe  
 Al er etin vp ful clene—  
 Es nowþer leuid biche ne whelp—  
 þat es wele on oure semblanc sene,  
 And þai er fled þat suld vs help.'

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A knight þat was of grete renowne—  
 Sir Iohn de Viene was his name—  
 He was wardaine of þe toune  
 And had done Ingland mekill schame.  
 For all þaire boste þai er to blame,  
 Ful stalworthly þare haue þai streuyn.  
 A bare es cumen to mak þam tame,  
 Kayes of þe toun to him er gisen.

85

þe kaies er ȝolden him of þe ȝate,—  
 Lat him now kepe þam if he kun.  
 To Calais cum þai all to late,  
 Sir Philip, and Sir Iohn his sun.  
 Al war ful ferd þat þare ware sun,  
 þaire leders may þai barely ban.  
 All on þis wise was Calais won:  
 God sauþ þam þat it sogat wan!

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## C. ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD III, A.D. 1377.

Bodleian MS. Vernon (about 1400), f. 410<sup>b</sup>.

A ! **DERE** God, what mai þis be,  
 þat alle þing weres and wasteþ awai ?  
 Frendschip is but a vanyté,  
 Vnneþe hit dures al a day.  
 Þei beo so sliper at assai,  
 So leof to han, and loþ to lete,  
 And so fikel in heore fai,  
 þat selden iseȝe is sone forȝete.

I sei hit not, wiþouten a cause,  
 And þerfore takes riht good hede,  
 For ȝif ȝe construwe wel þis clause,  
 I puit ȝou holly out of drede  
 þat for puire schame ȝor hertes wol blede  
 And ȝe þis matere wysli trete :  
 He þat was vr moste spede  
 Is selden iseȝe and sone forȝete.

Sum tyme an Englisch schip we had,  
 Nobel hit was and heih of tour,  
 þorw al Cristendam hit was drad,  
 And stif wolde stande in vch a stour,  
 And best dorst byde a scharþ schour,  
 And oþer stormes, smale and grete.  
 Now is þat schip, þat bar þe flour,  
 Selden seȝe and sone forȝete.

Into þat schip þer longed a rooþur  
 þat steered þe schip and gouerned hit ;  
 In al þis world nis such anoþur,  
 As me þinkeþ in my wit.

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Whyl schip and roþur togeder was knit,  
 þei dredde nouþer tempest, druyȝe nor wete; 30  
 Nou be þei boþe in synder flit,  
 þat selden seyȝe is sone forȝete.

Scharpe wawes þat schip has sayled,  
 And sayed alle sees at auentur.

For wynt ne wederes neuer hit fayled  
 Whil þe roþur mihte enduir. 35

þouȝ þe see were rouh or elles dimuir,  
 Gode hauenes þat schip wolde gete.  
 Nou is þat schip, I am wel suir,  
 Selde iseye and sone forȝete. 40

þis goode schip I may remene  
 To þe chiualrye of þis londe;  
 Sum tyme þei counted nouȝt a bene  
 Beo al Fraunce, ich vnderstonde.

þei tok and slouȝ hem with heore honde,  
 þe power of Fraunce, boþ smal and grete,  
 And brouȝt þe king hider to byde her bonde:  
 And nou riht sone hit is forȝete. 45

þat schip hadde a ful siker mast,  
 And a sayl strong and large, 50  
 þat made þe gode schip neuer agast  
 To vndertake a þing of charge;  
 And to þat schip þer longed a barge  
 Of al Fraunce ȝaf nouȝt a clete;  
 To vs hit was a siker targe,  
 And now riht clene hit is forȝete. 55

þe roþur was nouþer ok ne elm,—  
 Hit was Edward þe Pridde, þe noble kniht.  
 þe Prince his sone bar vp his helm,  
 þat neuer scoumfited was in fift. 60

The Kyng him rod and rouwed ariht;  
 þe Prince dredde nouþur stok nor strete.  
 Nou of hem we lete ful liht:  
 þat selde is seȝe is sone forȝete.

þe swifte barge was Duk Henri,  
 þat noble kniht and wel assayed,  
 And in his leggaunce worbili  
 He abod mony a bitter brayd.  
 ȝif þat his enemys ouȝt outrayed,  
 To chasis hem wolde he not lete.  
 Nou is þat lord ful lowe ileyd:  
 þat selde is seȝe is sone forȝete.

þis gode Cɔmunes, bi þe rode!  
 I likne hem to the schipes mast,  
 þat with heore catel and heore goode  
 Mayntened þe werre boþ furst and last.  
 þe wynd þat bleuȝ þe sclip wiþ blast  
 Hit was gode preȝers, I sei hit atrete.  
 Nou is deuoutnes out icast,  
 And mony gode dedes ben clen forȝete.

þus ben þis lordes ileid ful lowe:  
 þe stok is of þe same rote;  
 An ympe biginnes for to growe  
 And ȝit I hope schal ben vr bote,  
 To holde his fomen vnder fote,  
 And as a lord be set in sete.  
 Crist leue þat he so mote,  
 þat selden iseȝe be not forȝete!

Weor þat impe fully growe,  
 þat he had sarri sap and piþ,  
 I hope he schulde be kud and knowe  
 For conquerour of moni a kiþ.

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He is ful lyflich in lyme and lyp  
In armes to trauayle and to swete.

Crist leeue we so fare him wiþ  
þat selden seȝe be neuer forȝete !

And þersore holliche I ou rede,  
Til þat þis ympe beo fully growe,  
þat vch a mon vp wiþ þe hede  
And mayntene him, boþe heiȝe and lowe.

þe Frenſche men cunne boþe boste and blowe;  
And wiþ heore scornes vs toþrete,  
And we beoþ boþe vnuynde and slowe,  
þat selden seȝe is sone forȝete.

And þersore, gode sires, takeþ reward  
Of ȝor douhti kyng þat dyȝede in áge,  
And to his sone, Prince Edward,  
þat welle was of alle corage.

Suche two lordes of heiȝ parage  
I not in eorþe whon we schal gete ;  
And nou heore los biginneþ to swage,  
þat selde iseȝe is sone forȝete.

95

100

105

110

D. JOHN BALL'S LETTER TO THE PEASANTS  
OF ESSEX, 1381.

St. Albans MS. British Museum Royal 13. E. ix (about 1400), f. 287 a.

IOHON SCHEP, som tyme Seynte Marie prest of ȝork, and  
now of Colchestr, greteth wel Iohan Nameles, and Iohan  
þe Mullere, and Iohan Cartere, and biddeþ hem þat þei bee  
war of gyle in borugh, and stondeth togidre in Godes name,  
þ and biddeþ Peres Plouȝman go to his werk, and chastise

wel Hobbe þe Robbere, and takeþ wiþ ȝow Iohan Trewman,  
and alle hiis felawes, and no mo, and loke schappe ȝou to  
on heued, and no mo.

Iohan þe Mullere haþ ygrounde smal, smal, smal;  
þe Kynges sone of heuene schal paye for al. 10  
Be war or *ye* be wo;  
Knoweþ ȝour freend fro ȝour foo;  
Haueth ynow, and seith 'Hoo';  
And do wel and bettre, and flieth synne,  
And sekeþ pees, and hold ȝou þerinne; 15  
and so biddeþ Iohan Trewman and alle his felawes.

E. ON THE YEAR 1390-1.

St. John's College (Oxford) MS. 209, f. 57 8.

THE ax was sharpe, the stokke was harde,  
In the xiiii yere of Kyng Richarde.

11 *ve] be MS.*

## XV

### MISCELLANEOUS PIECES IN VERSE

Under this head are grouped a number of short poems, representing forms of composition that survive only by fortunate chance.

A is a curious little song, which has been printed from Hale MS. 135 by G. E. Woodbine in *Modern Language Review*, vol. iv, p. 236, and reconstructed by Skeat at vol. v, p. 105, of the same periodical.

B and C are the best-known lyrics of the important collection edited by Böddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen des MS. Harley 2253*, Berlin 1878. They are literary and rather artificial in form.

D and E are minstrels' songs found, among other popular snatches, on a fly-leaf of Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913, and edited by Heuser in *Anglia*, vol. xxx, p. 173. In E lines 14-16 and ll. 17-19 are to be expanded on the model of ll. 7-13.

All these songs are early, and have a lightness and gaiety that become rare as the fourteenth century advances.

F is one of several English scraps (ed. Furnivall in *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, E.E.T.S., pp. 249 ff.) that are found scattered through the Latin text of MS. Harley 7322. Most of the English pieces are without poetical merit, but in this one poem the writer has attained a perfect simplicity.

G, printed in Wright and Halliwell's *Reliquiae Antiquae*, 1845, vol. i, p. 144, has been recognized as the first of the English ballads. It is the only example before 1400 of the swift and dramatic movement, the sudden transitions, and the restrained expression, characteristic of the ballad style.

H, first printed in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. i, p. 240, is the latest of the short pieces. With onomatopoeic effects it gives a vivid if unfriendly picture of a blacksmith's forge on a busy night.

I is a charm edited by Furnivall at p. 43 of the E.E.T.S. volume in which F appears.

## A. NOW SPRINGS THE SPRAY.

Lincoln's Inn MS. Hale 135 (about 1300).

*Nou sprinkes þe sprai,  
Al for loue icche am so seek  
þat slepen I ne mai.*

Als I me rode þis endre dai  
O mi playinge,  
Seih I hwar a litel mai  
Bigan to singge :  
'þe clot him clingge !  
Wai es him i louue-longinge  
Sal libben ai !'  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

5

10

Son icche herde þat mirie note,  
þider I drogh ;  
I sonde hire in an herber swot  
Vnder a bogh,  
With ioie inogh.  
Son I asked : 'þou mirie mai,  
Hwi sinkestou ai ?'  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

15

þan answerde þat maiden swote  
Midde wordes fewe :  
'Mi lemmán me haues bihot  
Of louue trewe :  
He chaunges anewe.  
Yiif I mai, it shal him rewe  
Bi þis dai.'  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

20

4. *þis endre dai* als I me rode *MS.*; corr. *Skeat.*  
*indistinct.* 8. *clingge*] *clingges* *MS.*

5. *playinge*]

## B. SPRING.

MS. Harley 2253 (about 1325), f. 71 b.

LENTEN ys come wiþ loue to toune,  
 Wiþ blosmen and wiþ briddes rounes,  
 þat al þis blisse bryngēþ.

Dayesēzes in þis dales,  
 Notes suete of nyhtegales,

Vch foul song singēþ.

þe þrestelcoc him þreteþ oo,  
 Away is huere wynter wo,

When woderouc springēþ.

þis foules singēþ ferly fele,  
 Ant wlyteþ on huere twynter† wele,  
 þat al þe wode ryngēþ.

þe rose rayleþ hire rode,  
 þe leues on þe lyhte wode

Waxen al wiþ wille.

þe mone mandeþ hire bleo,  
 þe lilie is lossom to seo,

þe fenyl and þe fille.

Wowes þis wilde drakes ;  
 †Mileſt murgeþ huere makes,

Ase strem þat strikeþ stille.

Mody meneþ, so doþ mo—

Ichet ycham on of þo,

For loue þat likes ille.

þe mone mandeþ hire lyht ;

So doþ þe semly sonne bryht,

When briddes singēþ breme.

Deawes donkeþ þe dounes ;

Deores wiþ huere derne rounes,

Domes for te deme ;

22 doþ] doh MS.

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Wormes woweþ vnder cloude ;  
Wymmen waxeþ wounder proude,

So wel hit wol hem seme.

35  
3ef me shal wonte wille of on,  
þis wunne weole y wole forgon,  
Ant wyht in wode be fleme.

35

## C. ALYSOUN.

MS. Harley 2253, f. 63 b.

BYTUENE Mersh and Aueril,

When spray biginneþ to springe,  
þe lutel foul hap hire wyl

On hyre lud to syng.

Ich libbe in loue-longinge

5

For semlokest of alle þynge;

He may me blisse bringe—

Icham in hire baundoun.

*An hendy hap ichabbe yhent;*

*Ichat from heuene it is me sent;*

10

*From alle wymmen mi loue is lent.*

*And lyht on Alysoun.*

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,

Hire browe browne, hire eȝe blake;

Wip lossum chere he on me loh,

15

Wip middel smal and wel ymake.

Bote he me wolle to hire take,

For te buen hire owen make,

Longe to lyuen ichulle forsake,

And seye fallen adoun.

20

*An hendy hap, &c.*

Nihtes when y wende and wake,  
 Forþi myn wonges waxeþ won,  
 Leuedi, al for þine sake  
 Longinge is ylent me on.  
 In world nis non so wyter mon  
 þat al hire bounte telle con ;  
 Hire swyre is whittore þen þe swon,  
 And feyrest may in toune.  
*An hendi (y hap), &c.*

Icham for wowing al forwake,  
 Wery so water in wore,  
 Lest eny reue me my make,  
 Ychabbe yþyrned ȝore.  
 Betere is þolien whyle sore  
 ȝen mournen euermore.  
 Geynest vnder gore,  
 Herkne to my roun.

*An hendi (hap ichabbe yhent ;  
 Ichot from heuene it is me sent ;  
 From alle wymmen mi loue is lent,  
 And lyht on Alysoun).*

## D. THE IRISH DANCER.

Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913.

ICHAM of Irlaunde,  
 Ant of the holy londe  
 Of Irlande.  
 Gode sire, pray ich þe,  
 For of saynte charite,  
 Come ant daunce wyt me  
 In Irlaunde.

4 þe] þe MS.

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## E. THE MAID OF THE MOOR.

Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913.

MAIDEN in the mor lay,  
 In the mor lay,  
 Seuenyst fulle, seuenist fulle,  
 Maiden in the mor lay,  
 In the mor lay, 5  
 Seuenistes fulle ant a day.

Welle was hire mete ;  
 Wat was hire mete ?  
 þe primerole ant the,—  
 þe primerole ant the,— 10  
 Welle was hire mete ;  
 Wat was hire mete ?—  
 The primerole ant the violet.

Welle (was hire dryng) ;  
 Wat was hire dryng ? 15  
 þe chelde water of (þe) welle-spring.  
 Welle was hire bour ;  
 Wat was hire bour ?  
 þe rede rose an te lilie flour.

## F. THE VIRGIN'S SONG.

British Museum MS. Harley 7322 (about 1375), f. 135 b.

Iesu, swete sone dere !  
 On porful bed list þou here,  
 And þat me greueþ sore ;  
 For þi cradel is ase a bere,  
 Oxen and asse beþ þi fere : 5  
 Weepe ich mai þarfore.

7 was] wat M.S.

Iesu, swete, beo noth wroþ,  
 þou ich nabbe clout ne cloþ  
     þe on for to folde,  
     þe on to folde ne to wrappe,  
 For ich nabbe clout ne lappe;  
 Bote ley þou þi fet to my pappe,  
     And wite þe from þe colde.

10

## G. JUDAS.

Trinity College (Cambridge) MS. B. 14. 39 (about 1300), f. 34 a.

HIT wes upon a Scere þorsday þat vre Louerd aros;  
 Ful milde were þe wordes He spec to Iudas:

Iudas, þou most to Iurselem, oure mete for to bugge;  
 þritti platen of seluer þou bere upo þi rugge.

þou comest fer i þe brode stret, fer i þe brode strete;  
 Summe of þine cunesmen þer þou meist imete.

5

Imette wid is soster, þe swikele wimon:  
 'Iudas, þou were wrþe me stende þe wid ston, (bis)  
 For þe false prophete þat tou bileuest upon.'

'Be stille, leue soster, þin herte þe tobreke!

10

Wiste min Louerd Crist, ful wel He wolde be wreke.'

'Iudas, go þou on þe roc, heie upon þe ston,  
 Lei þin heued i my barm, slep þou þe anon.'

Sone so Iudas of slepe was awake,  
 þritti platen of seluer from hym weren itake.

15

He drou hymselfe bi þe top, þat al it lauede a blode;  
 þe Iewes out of Iurselem awenden he were wode.

Foret hym com þe riche Ieu þat heiste Pilatus:  
 'Wolte sulle þi Louerd, þat hette Iesus?'

‘I nul sulle my Louerd for nones cunnes eiste,  
Bote hit be for þe þritti platen þat He me bitaiste.’

20

‘Wolte sulle þi Lord Crist for enes cunnes golde?’

‘Nay, bote hit be for þe platen þat He habben wolde.’

In him com ur Lord gon, as is postles seten at mete:

‘Wou sitte ye, postles, ant wi nule ye ete? (*bis*)

25

Ic am iboust ant isold today for oure mete.’

Up stod him Iudas: ‘Lord, am I þat?

I nas neuer o þe stude þer me þe euel spec.’

Up him stod Peter, ant spec wid al is miste:

‘þau Pilatus him come wid ten hundred cnistes, (*bis*)

30

Yet ic wolde, Loæerd, for þi loue fiste.’

‘Stille þou be, Peter! Wel I þe icnowe;

þou wolt fursake me þrien ar þe coc him crowe.’

## H. THE BLACKSMITHS.

British Museum MS. Arundel 292 (about 1425-50), f. 71 b.

SWARTE smekyd smeþes smateryd wyth smoke

Dryue me to deth wyth den of here dyntes.

Swech noys on nyghtes ne herd men neuer:

What knauene cry and clateryng of knockes!

þe cammede kongons cryen after ‘col, col!’

5

And blowen here bellewys, þat al here brayn brestes:

‘Huf, puf!’ seith þat on; ‘haf, paf!’ þat oþer.

þei spyttyn and spraulyn and spellyn many spelles;

þei gnauen and gnacchen, þei gronys togydere,

And holdyn hem hote wyth here hard hamers.

10

Of a bole-hyde ben here barm-fellys;

Here schankes ben schakeled for the fere-flunderys;

Heuy hamerys þei han, þat hard ben handled,

Stark strokes þei stryken on a stelyd stokke :  
 Lus, bus ! las, das ! rowtyn be rowe. 15  
 Swech dolful a dreme þe deuyl it todryue !  
 þe mayster longith a lityl, and lascheth a lesse,  
 Twyneth hem tweyn, and towchith a treble :  
 Tik, tak ! hic, hac ! tiket, taket ! tyk, tak !  
 Lus, bus ! lus, das ! swych lyf thei ledyn 20  
 Alle cloþemerys : Cryst hem gyue sorwe !  
 May no man for brenwaternys on nyght han hys rest !

## I. RATS AWAY.

Bodleian MS. Rawlinson C. 288, f. 113 (15th-century writing, blurred).  
 I comawnde alle þe ratones þat are here abowte,  
 þat non dwelle in þis place, withinne ne wþhowte,  
 Thorgh þe vertu of Iesu Crist, þat Mary bare abowte,  
 þat alle creatures owyn for to lowte,  
 And thorgh þe vertu of Mark, Mathew, Luke, an Ion,— 5  
 Alle foure Awangelys corden into on,—  
 Thorgh þe vertu of Sent Geretrude, þat mayde clene,  
 God graunte þat grace  
 þat *(non)* raton dwelle in þe place  
 þat here namis were nemeled in ; 10  
 And thorgh þe vertu of Sent Kasi,  
 þat holy man, þat prayed to God Almyty  
 For skaithes þat þei deden  
 Hys medyn  
 Be dayes and be nyȝt, 15  
 God bad hem flen and gon out of euery manesse syȝt.  
*Dominus Deus Sabaot ! Emanuel, þe gret Godes name !*  
 I betweche þes place from ratones and from alle oþer schame.  
 God sauȝ þis place fro alle oþer wykked wyties,  
 Boȝe be dayes and be nytes ! *et in nomine Patris et Filii, &c.* 20

## XVI

### • THE YORK PLAY 'HARROWING OF HELL' •

British Museum MS. Addit. 35290 (about 1430-40), f. 193 b.

The miracle play *Harrowing of Hell* is assigned to the craft of Saddlers in the York cycle, edited by Miss L. Toulmin-Smith, Oxford 1885, pp. 372 ff. This is the text reproduced below. It is also found, though in a less perfect form, among the *Towneley Plays*, ed. England and Pollard, E.E.T.S., 1897, pp. 293 ff.

All the mediaeval stories of Christ's Descent into Hell are based on the gospel of Nicodemus, which seems to date from the fourth century, though the legend is referred to nearly two centuries earlier. This apocryphal narrative was popular throughout the Middle Ages. There is a prose translation in late Anglo-Saxon, and a Middle English verse rendering supplies some of the phrases in the play.

Two points deserve notice for their bearing on the development of miracles. A trace of their origin in the services of the Church is seen in the use made of the Scriptural passage 'Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae', the dramatic possibilities of which were recognized in ritual from an early date. And the growing taste for comic scenes is met, without prejudice to the serious characters, by the rudimentary buffoonery of the Devil and his companions.

#### DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ADAME	JOHANNES BAPTISTA	BELLIALL
EUA	MOYES	MICHILL (Archangel)
ISAIAH	BELSABUB	PRIMUS DIABOLUS
SYMEON	SATTAN	SECUNDUS DIABOLUS
IESUS	DAUID	

[SCENE I, *outside the gates of Hell.*]

⟨Jesus. M⟩anne on molde, be meke to me,  
And haue thy Maker in þi mynde,  
And thynke howe I haue tholid for þe  
With pereles paynes for to be pyned.

The forward of my Fadir free  
 Haue I fulfilid, as folke may fynde,  
 Perfore aboute nowe woll I bee  
 Pat I haue bought for to vnbynde.  
 Pe feende þame wanne with trayne,  
 Thurgh drewte of erthely foode ;  
 I haue þame getyn agayne  
 Thurgh bying with my bloode.

5

10

2. And so I schall þat steede restore  
 Fro whilke þe feende fell for synne ;  
 þare schalle mankynde wonne euermore  
 In blisse þat schall neuere blynne.  
 All þat in werke my werkemen were,  
 Owte of thare woo I wol þame wynne,  
 And some signe schall I sende before  
 Of grace, to garre þer gamys begynne.  
 A light I woll þei haue  
 To schewe þame I schall come sone ;  
 My bodie bidis in graue  
 Tille alle thes dedis be done.

15

20

3. My Fadir ordand on þis wise  
 Astir His will þat I schulde wende,  
 For to fulfille þe prophicye(s),  
 And als I spake my solace to spende.  
 My frendis, þat in me faith affies,  
 Nowe fro ther fois I schall þame fende,  
 And on the thirde day ryght vprise,  
 And so tille heuen I schall assende.  
 Sithen schall I come agayne  
 To deme bothe goode and ill  
 Tille endles ioie or peyne ;  
 þus is my Fadris will.

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[SCENE II, Hell ; at one side Limbo, enclosing the patriarchs and prophets ; a light shines across.]

4. *Adame.* Mi bretheren, harkens to me here,  
Swilke hope of heele neuere are we hadde.  
Foure thowsande and sex hundereth ȝere  
Haue we bene heere in þis steddet.

40

Nowe see I signe of solace seere,  
A glorious gleme to make vs gladde,  
Wherfore I hope oure helpe is nere,  
And sone schall sesse oure sorowes sadde.

*Eua.* Adame, my husband hende,  
þis menys solas certayne ;  
Such lighȝ gune on vs lende  
In Paradise full playne.

45

5. *Isaiah.* Adame, we schall wele vndirstande ;  
I, Ysaias, as God me kende,  
I prechid in Neptalym þat lande,  
And ȝabulon, even vntill ende.  
I spake of folke in mirke walkand,  
And saide a light schulde on þame lende ;  
This lerid I whils I was leuand,  
Nowe se I God þis same hath sende.  
þis light comes all of Criste,  
þat seede, to sauе vs nowe,  
þus is my poynte puplissid.  
But Symeon, what sais þou ?

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60

6. *Symeon.* þis, my tale of farleis feele,  
For in þis temple His frendis me fande ;  
I hadde delite with Hym to dele,  
And halsed homely with my hande.  
I saide, 'Lorde, late thy seruaunt lele  
Passe nowe in pesse to liffe lastand,

65

40 in þis stedde] in darknes stad *Towneley.* 49 Isaiah] Isaac MS.

For nowe myselfe has sene Thy hele,  
 Me liste no lengar to liffe in lande.'  
 ¶is light þou hast purueyed  
 To folkes þat liffis in leede,  
 þe same þat I þame saide,  
 I see fulfillid in dede.

70

7. *Iohan. Baptista.* Als voyce criand to folke I kende  
 þe weyes of Criste, als I wele kanne;  
 I baptiste Hym with bothe my hande  
 Euen in þe floode of flume Iordanne. 75  
 þe Holy Goste fro heuene discende  
 Als a white dowue doune on Hym þanne;  
 The Fadir voice, my mirthe to mende,  
 Was made to me euen als manne,  
 'This is my Sone,' he saide, 80  
 'In whome me paies full wele.'  
 His light is on vs laide,  
 He comes oure cares to kele.

8. *Moyses.* Of þat same light lernyng haue I,  
 To me Moyses He mustered his myght,  
 And also vnto anodir, Hely,  
 Wher we were on an hille on hight.  
 Whyte as snowe was His body,  
 And His face like to þe sonne to sight: 85  
 No man on molde was so myghty  
 Grathely to loke agaynst þat light;  
 þat same light se I nowe  
 Shynyng on vs sarteyne,  
 Wherfore trewly I trowe  
 We schalle sone passe fro payne. 90

95

9. *i Diabolus.* Helpel! Belsabub! to bynde þer boyes,  
 Such harrowe was neuer are herde in helle.

*ii Diab.* Why rooris þou soo, Rebalde? þou roysis;  
What is betidde, canne þou ought telle? 100

*i Diab.* What! heris þou noȝt þis vggely noyse?  
þes lurdans þat in Lymbo dwelle,  
þei make menyng of many ioies,  
And musteres grete mirthe þame emell.

*ii Diab.* Mirthe? nay, nay, þat poynte is paste, 105  
More hele schall þei neuer haue.

*i Diab.* þei crie on Criste full faste,  
And sais he schal þame sauе.

10. *Belsabub.* ȝa, if he sauе þame noght, we schall,  
For they are sperde in speciall space; 110  
Whils I am prince and principall  
Schall þei neuer passe oute of þis place.  
Calle vppe Astrotte and Anaball  
To giffe þer counsaile in þis case,  
Bele-Berit and Belial, 115  
To marre þame þat swilke maistries mase.  
Say to Satan oure sire,  
And bidde þame bringe also  
Lucifer louely of lyre.  
*i Diab.* Al redy, lorde, I goo. 120

11. *Iesus [Without].* *Attollite portas, principes,*  
Oppen vppe, ȝe princes of paynes sere,  
*Et eleuamini eternales,*  
Youre yendles ȝatis þat ȝe haue here.

*Sattan.* What page is þere þat makes prees, 125  
And callis hym kyng of vs in fere?

*Dauid [in Limbo].* I lerid leuand, withouten lees,  
He is a kyng of vertues clere.

A! Lorde, mekill of myght,  
And stronge in ilke a stoure, 130  
In batailes ferse to fight,  
And worthy to wynne honnoure.

12. *Sattan.* Honnoure! in þe deuel way, for what dede?  
 All erthely men to me are thrall;  
 þe lady þat calles hym lorde in leede      135  
 Hadde neuer ȝitt herberowe, house, ne halle.  
*i Diab.* Harke, Belsabub! I haue grete drede,  
 For hydously I herde hym calle.  
*Belliali.* We! spere oure ȝates, all ill mot þou spede!  
 And sette furthe watches on þe wall.      140  
 And if he calle or crie  
 To make vs more debate,  
 Lay on hym þan hardly,  
 And garre hym gang his gate.

13. *Sattan.* Telle me what boyes dare be so bolde      145  
 For drede to make so mekill draye.  
*i Diab.* Itt is þe Iewe þat Iudas tolde  
 For to be dede, þis othir daye.  
*Sattan.* O we! þis tale in tyme is tolde,  
 þis traytoure traues(es) vs alway;      150  
 He schall be here full harde in holde,  
 Loke þat he passe noght, I þe praye.  
*ii Diab.* Nay, nay, he will noȝt wende  
 Away or I be ware,  
 He shappis hym for to schende      155  
 Alle helle, or he go ferre.

14. *Sattan.* Nay, faitour, þerof schall he faille,  
 For alle his fare I hym deffie;  
 I knowe his trantis fro toppe to taile,  
 He leuys with gaudis and with gilery.      160  
 þerby he brought oute of oure bale,  
 Nowe late, Lazar of Betannye,  
 þerfore I gaffe to þe Iewes counsaille  
 þat þei schulde alway garre hym dye.

I entered in Iudas  
 þat forwarde to fulfille,  
 þerfore his hire he has,  
 Allway to wonne here stille.

15. *Belsabub.* Sir Sattanne, sen we here þe saie

þat þou and þe Iewes wer same assente,  
 And wotte he wanne Lazar awaye,  
 þat tille vs was tane for to tente,  
 Trowe þou þat þou marre hym maye  
 To mustir myghtis, what he has mente?  
 If he nowe depriue vs of oure praye,  
 We will ȝe witte whanne þei are wente.  
*Sattan.* I bidde ȝou be noȝt abasshed,  
 But boldely make yowre boune  
 With toles þat ȝe on traste,  
 And dyng ȝat dastard doun.

170

175

180

16. *Jesus [Without].* *Principes, portas tollite,*

Vndo youre ȝatis, ȝe princis of prude,  
*Et introibit rex glorie,*  
 þe kyng of blisse comes in þis tyde.

[Enters the gates of Hell.]

*Sattan.* O wte! harrowe (what harlot) is hee 185  
 þat sais his kyngdome schall be cryed?

*David [in Limbo].* þat may þou in my Sawter see  
 For þat poynte I prophicie(d).

I saide þat he schuld breke  
 Youre barres and bandis by name,  
 And on youre werkis take wreke;  
 Nowe schalle ȝe see þe same.

190

17. *Jesus.* þis steede schall stonde no lenger stoken;  
 Oþynne vppe, and latte my pepul passe!

170 þe] ȝe MS. 185 what harlot] from Towneley MS.: om  
 MS. 188 I] of MS.

*Diabolus.* Owte! beholdes, oure baill is brokynne, 195  
And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras.

Telle Lucifer alle is vnlokynne.

*Belsabub.* What þanne, is Lymbus lorne? allas!  
Garre Satan helpe þat we wer wroken;  
Þis werke is werse þanne euere it was. 200

*Sattan.* I badde ȝe schulde be boune  
If he made maistries more;  
Do dynge þat dastard doune,  
And sette hym sadde and sore.

18. *Belsabub.* ȝa, sette hym sore, þat is sone saide, 205  
But come þiselffe and serue hym soe;  
We may not bide his bittir braide,  
He wille vs marre and we wer moo.

*Sattan.* What! faitours, whersore are ȝe ferde?  
Haue ȝe no force to flitte hym froo?  
Belyue loke þat my gere be grathed,  
Miselffe schall to þat gedlyng goo. 210

[*To Jesus.*] Howe! belamy, abide,  
With al thy booste and bere,  
And telle to me þis tyde,  
What maistries makes þou here? 215

19. *Jesus.* I make no maistries but for myne,  
þame wolle I sauе, I telle þe nowe;  
þou hadde no poure þame to pyne,  
But as my prisoun for þer prowe 220  
Here haue þei soiorned, noght as thyne,  
But in thy warde, þou wote wele howe.

*Sattan.* And what deuel haste þou done ay syne,  
þat neuer wolde negh þame nere, or nowe?

*Jesus.* Nowe is þe tyme certayne 225  
Mi Fadir ordand before

þat they schulde passe fro Payne,  
And wonne in mirthe euer more.

20. *Sattan.* Thy fadir knewe I wele be sight,  
He was a write his mette to wynne, 230  
And Marie me menys þi modir hight,  
þe vttiremeste ende of all þi kynne.  
Who made þe be so mekill of myght?  
*Jesus.* þou wikid feende, latte be thy dynne!  
Mi Fadir wonnys in heuen on hight, 235  
With blisse þat schall neuere blynne.  
I am His awne sone,  
His forward to fulfille;  
And same' ay schall we wonne,  
And sundir' whan we wolle. 240

21. *Sattan.* God sonnel þanne schulde þou be ful  
gladde,  
Astir no catel neyd thowe craue!  
But þou has leued ay like a ladde,  
And in sorowe, as a symple knaue.  
*Jesus.* þat was for hartely loue I hadde 245  
Vntomannis soule, it for to saue;  
And for to make þe mased and madde,  
And by þat resoun þus dewly to haue  
Mi godhede here, I hidde  
In Marie modir myne, 250  
For it schulde noȝt be kidde  
To þe, nor to none of thyne.

22. *Sattan.* Al þis wolde I were tolde in ilke a toune.  
So, sen þou sais God is thy sire,  
I schall þe proue, be right resounne, 255  
þou motes His men into þe myre.

242 neyd thowe craue] þus þe I telle *first hand*.  
later M.S. knaue] *braide first hand*.

244 as] *added*

To breke His bidding were þei boune,  
 And, for they did at my desire,  
 Fro Paradise He putte þame doun  
 In helle here to haue þer hyre. 260  
 And thyselfe, day and nyght.  
 Has taught al men emang  
 To do resoune and right,  
 And here werkis þou all wrang.

**23. *Iesus.*** I wirke noght wrang, þat schal þow wihte, 265  
 If I my men fro woo will wynne ;  
 Mi prophetis playnly prechid it,  
 All þis note þat nowe begynne.  
 þai saide þat I schulde be obitte, 270  
 To hell þat I schulde entre in,  
 And sauе my seruauntis fro þat pitte,  
 Wher dampned saulis schall sitte for synne.  
 And ilke trewe prophettis tale  
 Muste be fulfillid in mee ;  
 I haue þame boughte with bale, 275  
 And in blisse schal þei be.

**24. *Sattan.*** Nowe sen þe listc 'allegge' þe lawes,  
 þou schalte be atteynted, or we twynne,  
 For þo þat þou to wittenesse drawes  
 Full even agaynst þe will begynne. 280  
 Salamon saide in his sawes  
 þat whoso enteres helle withynne  
 Shall neuer come oute, þus clerkis knawes,  
 And þerfore, felowe, leue þi dynne.  
 Iob, þi seruaunte, also 285  
 þus in his tyme gune telle,  
 þat nowthir frende nor foo  
 Shulde synde reles in helle

25. *Iesus.* He saide full soth, þat schall þou see,  
 þat in helle may be no reles, 290  
 But of þat place þan preached he  
 Where synfull care schall euere encrees.  
 And in þat bale ay schall þou be,  
 Whare sorowes sere schall neuer sesse,  
 And for my folke þerso wer free, 295  
 Nowe schall þei passe to þe place of pees.  
 þai were here with my wille,  
 And so schall þei fourthe wende,  
 And þiselue schall fulfille  
 þer wooe withouten ende. 300

26. *Sattan.* O we! þanne se I howe þou menys emang  
 Some mesure with malice to melle,  
 Sen þou sais all schall noȝt gang,  
 But some schalle alway with vs dwelle.  
*Iesus.* ȝaa, witte þou wele, ellis were it wrang, 305  
 Als cursed Cayme þat slewe Abell,  
 And all þat hastis hemselue to hange,  
 Als Iudas and Archedefell,  
 Datan and Abiron,  
 And alle of þare assente; 310  
 Als tyrantis euerilkone  
 þat me and myne turmente.

27. And all þat liste noght to lere my lawe,  
 þat I haue leste in lande nowe newe,  
 þat is my comyng for to knawe, 315  
 And to my sacramente pursewe,  
 Mi dede, my rysing, rede be rawe,  
 Who will noght trowe, þei are noght trewe,  
 Vnto my dome I schall þame drawe,  
 And iuge þame worse þanne any Iewe. 320

And all þat likis to leere  
 My lawe, and leue þerbye,  
 Shall neuere haue harmes heere,  
 But welthe, as is worthy.

28. *Sattan.* Nowe here my hande, I halde me paied ; 325  
 þis poynte is playnly for oure prowe ;  
 If þis be soth þat þou hast saide,  
 We schall haue moo þanne we haue nowe.  
 þis lawe þat þou nowe late has laide  
 I schall lere men noȝt to allowe, 330  
 Iff þei it take, þei be betraied,  
 For I schall turne þame tye, I trowe.  
 I schall walke este and weste,  
 And garre þame werke wele werre.  
*Iesus.* Naye, feende, þou schall be feste, 335  
 þat þou schalte flitte not ferre.

29. *Sattan.* Feste ! þat were a foule reasoun,  
 Nay, bellamy, þou bus be smytte.  
*Iesus.* Mighill ! myne aungell, make þe boune,  
 And feste yone fende, þat he noght flitte. 340  
 And Deuyll, I comaunde þe go doun  
 Into thy selle where þou schalte sitte. [ *Satan sinks.*  
*Sattan.* Owt, ay ! herrowe ! helpe Mahounde !  
 Nowe wex I woode oute of my witte.  
*Belsabub.* Sattan, þis saide we are, 345  
 Nowe schall þou fele þi fitte.  
*Sattan.* Allas ! for dole and care,  
 I synke into helle pitte. [ *Falls into the pit.*

30. *Adame.* A ! Iesu Lorde, mekill is þi myght,  
 That mekis þiselffe in þis manere, 350  
 Vs for to helpe, as þou has hight,  
 Whanne both forfeite, I and my feere.

Here haue we leuyd withouten light  
 Foure thousand and six hundred *ȝere*;

Now se I be þis solempne sight  
 Howe Thy mercy hath made vs *clere*.

*Eue.* A! Lorde, we were worthy

Mo turmentis for to taste,

But mende vs with mercye,

Als þou of myght is moste.

355

31. *Baptista.* A! Lorde, I loue þe inwardly,  
 That me wolde make þi messengere  
 Thy comyng in erlh for to crye,  
 And teche þi faith to folke in seere;  
 And sithen before þe for to dye,  
 And bringe boodworde to þame here,  
 How þai schulde haue Thyne helpe in hye:  
 Nowe se I all þi poyntis appere.  
 Als Dauid prophete trewe  
 Oste tymes tolde vntill vs,  
 Of þis comyng he knewe,  
 And saide it schulde be þus.

365

32. *Dauid.* Als I haue saide, ȝitt saie I soo,  
*Ne derelinquas, Domine,*

*Animam meam (in) inferno,*

375

Leffe noght my saule, Lorde, astir þe,  
 In depe helle where dampned schall goo,

Ne suffre neuere þsaules fro þe bet

The sorowe of þame þat wonnes in woo

Ay full of filthe, þat may repleyet.

380

*Adame.* We thanke His grete goodnessse  
 He fette vs fro þis place,

Makes ioie nowe more and lesse;

*Omnis.* We laude God of His grace.

33. *Jesus.* Adame and my frendis in seere, 385  
 Fro all youre fooes come fourth with me,  
 ȝe schalle be sette in solas seere,  
 Wher ȝe schall neuere of sorowes see.  
 And Mighill, myn aungell clere,  
 Ressayue þes saules all vnto þe, 390  
 And lede þame als I schall þe lere  
 To Paradise with playe and plente.

[*They come out of Limbo.*

Mi graue I woll go till,  
 Redy to rise vpperight,  
 And so I schall fulfille 395  
 That I before haue highte.

34. *Michill.* Lorde, wende we schall astir þi sawe,  
 To solace sere þai schall be sende,  
 But þat þer deuelis no draught vs drawe,  
 Lorde, blisse vs with þi holy hende. 400  
*Jesus.* Mi blissing haue ȝe all on rawe,  
 I schall be with youe, wher ȝe wende,  
 And all þat lelly luffes my lawe,  
 þai schall be blissid withouten ende.  
*Adame.* To þe, Lorde, be louyng, 405  
 þat vs has wonne fro waa,  
 For solas will we syng,  
*Laus Tibi cum gloria.* [Exeunt.

## XVII

### THE TOWNELEY PLAY OF NOAH

Towneley MS. (about 1475), ff. 76 ff.

The Towneley Miracles, so called because the manuscript belonged in recent times to the library of Towneley Hall in Lancashire, are edited by England and Pollard, E.E.T.S., 1897. The cycle is a composite one—for instance it includes a later form of the York play *Harrowing of Hell* (No. XVI, above)—but it is distinguished by a group of plays and interpolated scenes which seem to have been specially composed for representation at Wakefield. Formally this group is marked by the use of a peculiar nine-lined stanza, riming *aaaabccc b*, with central rimes in the first four lines. The rough vigour of the comic scenes is still more distinctive, and there can be little doubt that all are the work of one man. The specimen of his style most often reprinted is *The Second Shepherd's Play*, which has an original and purely secular comic plot. The *Play of Noah* is more typical of the English Miracle in its later development. This subject was always popular with early playwrights, for the Ark made a spectacle, and the traditional quarrels of Noah and his wife gave scope for contests in fisticuffs and rough raillery—the stuff of primitive comedy.

#### DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

NOE	PRIMUS FILIUS	PRIMA MULIER
DEUS	SECUNDUS FILIUS	SECUNDA MULIER
VXOR NOE	TERCIUS FILIUS	TERCIA MULIER

1. *Noe.* MYGHTFULL God veray, Maker of all that is,  
Thre persons withouten nay, oone God in endles blis,  
Thou maide both nyght and day, beest, fowle, and fysh,  
All creatures that lif may wrought Thou at Thi wish,  
As Thou wel myght;  
The son, the moyne, verament,  
Thou maide, the firmament,  
The sternes also full feruent  
To shyne Thou maide ful bright.

2. Angels Thou maide ful euen, all orders that is, 10  
 To haue the blis in heuen ; this did Thou, more and les,  
 Full mervelus to neuuen ; yit was ther vnyndnes  
 More bi foldis seuen then I can well expres ;  
 For whi ?  
 Of all angels in brightnes 15  
 God gaf Lucifer most lightnes,  
 Yit proudly he flyt his des,  
 And set hym euen Hym by.

3. He thoght hymself as worthi as Hym that hym made,  
 In brightnes, in bewty, therfor He hym degrade, 20  
 Put hym in a low degré soyn after, in a brade,  
 Hym and all his menye, wher he may be vnglad  
 For euer.  
 Shall thay neuer wyn away  
 Hence vnto Domysday, 25  
 Bot burne in bayle for ay ;  
 Shall thay neuer dysseuer.

4. Soyne after, that gracyous Lord to his liknes maide man,  
 That place to be restord euen as He began,  
 Of the Trinité bi accord, Adam and Eue that woman, 30  
 To multiplie without discord, in Paradise put He thaym,  
 And sithen to both  
 Gaf in commaundement  
 On the Tre of Life to lay no hend.  
 Bot yit the fals feynd 35  
 Made Hym with man wroth,

5. Entysyd man to glotony, styrd him to syn in pride ;  
 Bot in Paradise, securly, myght no syn abide,  
 And therfor man full hastely was put out in that tyde,  
 In wo and wandreth for to be, in paynes full vnrid 40  
 To knowe,

Fyrst in erth, *and* sythen in hell  
 With feyndis for to dwell,  
 Bot He his mercy mell  
 To those that will Hym trawe.

45

6. Oyle of mercy He hus hight, as I haue hard red,  
 To euery lifyng wight that wold luf Hym and dred ;  
 Bot now before His sight euery liffyng leyde,  
 Most party day and nyght, syn in word and dede

Full bold ;

50

Som in pride, ire, and enuy,  
 Som in coueteis and glotyny,  
 Som in sloth and lechery,  
 And other wise many fold.

7. Thersor I drede lest God on vs will take veniance,  
 For syn is now alod, without any repentance.  
 Sex hundredth yeris and od haue I, without distance,  
 In erth, as any sod, liffyd with grete grevance

Allway ;

55

And now I wax old,  
 Seke, sory, and cold,  
 As muk apon mold .  
 I widder away.

60

8. Bot yit will I cry for mercy and call :

Noe, Thi seruant, am I, Lord ouer all !

65

Thersor me, and my fry shal with me fall,  
 Saue from velany, and bryng to Thi hall

In heuen ;

• And kepe me from syn

This warlde within ;

70

Comly Kyng of mankyn,

I pray The, here my stevyn !

[*God appears above.*]

9. *Deus.* Syn I haue maide all thyng that is liffand,  
 Duke, emperour, and kyng, with Myne awne hand,  
 For to haue thare likyng, bi see and bi sand, 75  
 Euery man to My bydying shuld be bowand  
 Full feruent,  
 That maide man sich a creatoure,  
 Farest of favoure ;  
 Man must luf Me paramoure 80  
 By reson, and repent.

10. Me thoght I shewed man luf when I made hym to be  
 All angels abuf, like to the Trynyté ;  
 And now in grete reprove full low ligis he,  
 In erth hymself to stuf with syn that displeases Me 85  
 Most of all.  
 Veniance will I take  
 In erth for syn sake ;  
 My grame thus will I wake  
 Both of grete and small. 90

11. I repente full sore that euer maide I man ;  
 Bi me he settis no store, and I am his soferan ;  
 I will distroy therfor both beest, man and woman,  
 All shall perish, les and more ; that bargan may thay ban  
 That ill has done. 95  
 In erth I se right noght  
 Bot syn that is vnsought ;  
 Of those that well has wroght  
 Fynd I bot a fone.

12. Therfor shall I fordo all this medill-erd  
 With floodis that shall flo and ryn with hidous rerd ;  
 I haue good cause thereto ; for Me no man is ferd.  
 As I say shal I do—of veniance draw My swerd,  
 And make end 100

Of all that beris life,  
Sayf Noe and his wife,  
For thay wold neuer stryfe  
With Me, then Me offend.

105

13. Hym to mekill wyn, hastily will I go  
To Noe my seruand, or I blyn, to warn hym of his wo.  
In erth I se bot syn reynand to and fro,                   111  
Emang both more and myn, ichon other fo  
With all thare entent.

All shall I fordo  
With floodis that shall floo ;                                   115  
Wirk shall I thaym wo  
That will not repent.

[*God descends and addresses Noah.*]

14. Noe, My freend, I thee commaund, from cares the to keyle,  
A ship that thou ordand of nayle and bord ful wele.  
Thou was alway well-wirkand, to Me trew as stèle,   120  
To My bydyng obediand : frendship shal thou sele  
To mede.  
Of lennthe thi ship be  
Thre hundred cubettis, warn I the,  
Of heght euen<sup>n</sup> thirté,\*   125  
Of fyfty als in brede.

15. Anoynt thi ship with pik and tar, without and als within,  
The water out to spar—this is a noble gyn ;  
Look no man the mar, thre chese chambres begyn ;  
Thou must spend many a spar this wark or thou wyn   130  
To end fully.

• Make in thi ship also  
Parloures oone or two,  
And houses of offyce mo  
For beestis that ther must be.                                   135

129 chese] chefe *MS.*

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16. Oone cubite on hight a wyndo shal thou make ;  
 On the syde a doore, with slyght, beneyth shal thou take ;  
 With the shal no man fyght, nor do the no kyn wrake.  
 When all is doyne thus right, thi wife, that is thi make,  
 Take in to the ; 140  
 Thi sonnes of good fame,  
 Sem, Iaphet, and Came,  
 Take in also *hame*,  
 Thare wifis also thre.

17. For all shal be fordone that lif in land, bot ye, 145  
 With floodis that from abone shal fall, and that plenté ;  
 It shall begyn full sone to rayn vncessanté,  
 After dayes seuen be done, and induyf dayes fourty,  
 Withoutten sayll.  
 Take to thi ship also 150  
 Of ich kynd beestis two,  
 Mayll and femayll, bot no mo,  
 Or thou pull vp thi sayll,

18. For thay may the avayll when al this thyng is wroght.  
 Stuf thi ship with vitayll, for hungre that ye perish noght.  
 Of beestis, foul, and catayll, for thaym haue thou in  
 thoght, 156  
 For thaym is My counsayll that som socour be soght  
 In hast.  
 Thay must haue corn and hay,  
 And oder mete alway. 160  
 Do now as I the say,  
 In the name of the Holy Gast.

19. *Noe.* A ! *benedicile* ! what art thou that thus  
 Tellys afore that shall be ? Thou art full mervelus !  
 Tell me, for charité, thi name so gracius. 165  
*Deus.* My name is of dignyté, and also full gloriis  
 To knowe.

I am God most myghty,  
One God in Trynyty,  
Made the and ich man to be;  
To luf Me well thou awe.

170

20. *Noe.* I thank The, Lord so dere, that wold vowchsayf  
Thus low to appere to a symple knafe.  
Blis vs, Lord, here, for charité I hit crase,  
The better may we stere the ship that we shall hafe, 175  
Certayn.

*Deus.* Noe, to the and to thi fry  
My blyssyng graunt I;  
Ye shall wax and multiply  
And fili the erth agane,

180

21. When all thise floodis ar past, and fully gone away.

*Noe.* Lord, homward will I hast as fast as that I may;  
My *(wife)* will I frast what she will say, [Exit Deus.]  
And I am agast that we get som fray

Betwixt vs both;  
For she is full tethee,  
For litill oft angré;  
If any thyng wrang be,  
Soyne is she wróth.

*Tunc perget ad vxorem.*

22. God sped, dere wife, how sayre ye?

190

*Vxor.* Now, as euer myght I thryfe, the wars  
I thee see.  
Do tell me belise where has thou thus long be?  
To dede may we dryfe, or lif, for the,  
For want.

When we swete or swynk,  
Thou dos what thou thynk,  
Yit of mete and of drynk  
Haue we veray skant.

195

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23. *Noe.* Wife, we ar hard sted with tythyngis new.  
*Vxor.* Bot thou were worthi be cled in Stafford blew;  
 For thou art alway adred, be it fals or trew, 201  
 Bot God knowes I am led, and that may I rew,  
 Full ill;  
 For I dar be thi borow,  
 From euen vnto morow 205  
 Thou spekis euer of sorow;  
 God send the onys thi fill!

24. We women may wary all ill husbandis;  
 I haue oone, bi Mary that lawsyd me of my bandis!  
 If he teyn, I must tary, how so euer it standis, 210  
 With seymland full sory, wryngand boþ my handis  
 For diede.  
 Bot yit other while,  
 What with gam and with gyle,  
 I shall smyte and smyle, 215  
 And qwite hym his mede.

25. *Noe.* We! hold thi tong, ram-skyt, or I shall the still.  
*Vxor.* By my thryst, if thou smyte, I shal turne the  
 vntill.  
*Noe.* We shall assay as tye. Haue at the, Gill!  
 Apon the bone shal it byte.  
*Vxor.* A, so, Mary! thou smytis ill! 220  
 Bot I suppose  
 I shal not in thi det  
 Flyt of this flett!  
 Take the ther a langett  
 To tye vp thi hose! 225

26. *Noe.* A! wilt thou so? Mary! that is myne.  
*Vxor.* Thou shal thre for two, I swere bi Godis pyne!  
*Noe.* And I shall qwyte the tho, in fayth, or syne.  
*Vxor.* Out apon the, ho!

Noe. Thou can both byte and whyne

With a herd;

230

For all if she stryke,

Yit fast will she skryke;

In sayth, I hold none slyke

In all medill-erd.

27. Bot I will kepe charyté, for I haue at do.

235

Vxor. Here shal no man tary the, I pray the go to !  
Full well may we mys the, as euer haue I ro ;  
To spyn will I dres me.

Noe.

We ! fare well, lo ;

Bot wife,

Pray for me Beselé

240

To eft I com vnto the.

Vxor. Euen as thou prays for me,

As euer myght I thrise.

[Exit Vxor.]

28. Noe. I tary full lang fro my warke, I traw ;

Now my gere will I fang, and thederward draw ;

245

I may full ill gang, the soth for to knaw,

Bot if God help amang, I may sit downe daw

To ken ;

Now assay will I

How I can of wrightry,

250

*In nomine patris, et filii,*

*Et spiritus sancti. Amen.*

29. To begyn of this tree my bonys will I bend,

I traw from the Trynyté socoure will be send ;

It sayres full fayre, thynk me, this wark to my hend ;

Now blissid be He that this can amend.

Lo, here the lenght,

Thre nundreth cubettis euenly ;

Of breed, lo, is it fyfty ;

The heght is euen thyrti.

255

Cubettis full strenght.

194 XVII. THE TOWNELEY PLAY OF NOAH

30. Now my gowne will I cast and wyrk in my cote,  
 Make will I the mast or I flyt oone foote ;  
 A ! my bak, I traw, will brast ! This is a sory note !  
 Hit is wonder that I last, sich an old dote, 265  
     All dold,  
 To begyn sich a wark !  
 My bonys ar so stark,  
 No wonder if thay wark,  
     For I am full old. 270

31. The top and the sayll both will I make,  
 The helme and the castell also will I take,  
 To drife ich a nayll will I not forsake,  
 This gere may neuer fayll, that dar I vndertake  
     Onone. 275  
 This is a nobull gyn,  
 Thise nayles so thay ryn  
 Thoro more and myn  
     Thise bordis ichon.

32. Wyndow and doore, euen as He saide, 280  
 Thre ches chambre, thay ar well maide,  
 Pyk and tar full sure therapon laide ;  
 This will euer endure, therof am I paide ;  
     For why ?  
 It is better wroght 285  
 Then I coude haif thought.  
 Hym that maide all of noght  
     I thank onoly.

33. Now will I hy me, and no thyng be ledere,  
 My wife and my meneye to bryng euen heder.  
 Tent hedir tydely, wife, and consider,  
 Hens must vs fle, all sam togeder,  
     In hast. 290

*Vxor.* Whi, syr, what alis you?

Who is that asalis you?

To fle it avalis you

And ye be agast.

34. *Noe.* Ther is garn on the reyll other, my dame.

*Vxor.* Tell me that ich a deyll, els get ye blame.

*Noe.* He that cares may keill—blissid be His name!—

He has *het* for oure seyll to sheld vs fro shame, 301

And sayd

All this wrold aboute

With floodis so stoute,

That shall ryn on a route,

Shall bē ouerlaide.

305

35. He saide all shall be slain, bot oonely we,

Oure barnes that ar bayn, and thare wifis thre.

A ship He bad me ordbyn, to safe vs and oure fee;

Therfor with all oure mayn thank we that fre,

Beytter of bayll.

Hy vs fast, go we thedir.

*Vxor.* I wote neuer whedir,

I dase and I dedir

For ferd b̄f that *tayll*.

315

36. *Noe.* Be not aferd, haue done, trus sam oure gere,

That we be ther or none, without more dere.

*Primus filius.* It shall be done full sone. Brether,  
help to bere.

*Secundus filius.* Full long shall I not hoyne to do my  
devere,

Brether sam.

320

*Tercius filius.* Without any yelp,  
At my myght shall I help.

*Vxor.* Yit, for drede of a skelp,

Help well thi dam.

37. *Noe.* Now ar we there as we shuld be; 335  
 Do get in oure gere, oure catall and fe,  
 Into this vessell here, my chylder fre.  
*Vxor.* I was neuer bard ere, as euer myght I the,  
 In sich an oostre as this.  
 In fath, I can not fynd 339  
 Which is before, which is behynd.  
 Bot shall we here be pynd,  
 Noe, as haue thou blis?

38. *Noe.* Dame, as it is skill, here must vs abide grace;  
 Therfor, wife, with good will, com into this place. 335  
*Vxor.* Sir, for Iak nor for Gill will I turne my face,  
 Till I haue on this hill spon a space  
 On my rok.  
 Well were he myght get me!  
 Now will I downe set me; 340  
 Yit reede I no man let me,  
 For drede of a knok.

39. *Noe.* Behold to the heuen the cateractes all,  
 That are open full euen, grete and small,  
 And the planetis seuen left has thare stall. 345  
 Thise thoners and levyn downe gar fall  
 Full stout  
 Both halles and bowers,  
 Castels and towres.  
 Full sharp ar thise showers 350  
 That renys aboute.

40. Therfor, wife, haue done, com into ship fast.  
*Vxor.* Yei, Noe, go cloute thi shone, the better will  
 thai last.  
*Prima mulier.* Good moder, com in sone, for all is  
 ouercast  
 Both the son and the mone.

*Secunda mulier.* And many wynd blast 355

Full sharp.

Thise floodis **so** thay ryn,  
Therfor, moder, come in.

*Vxor.* In fayth, yit will I spyn;  
All in vayn ye carp.

360

41. *Tertia mulier.* If ye like ye may spyn, moder, in the  
ship.

*Noe.* Now is this twyys com in, dame, on my frenship.

*Vxor.* Wheder I lose or I wyn, in fayth, thi felowship  
Set I not at a pyn. This spyndill will I slip

Apon this hill, 365  
Or I styr oone fote.

*Noe.* I'eter! I traw we dote.  
Without any more note  
Come in if ye will.

42. *Vxor.* Yei, water nyghys so nere that I sit not dry, 370  
Into ship with a byr therfor will I hy  
For drede that I drone here.

*Noe.* Dame, securly,  
It bees boght ful derþ ye abode so long by  
Out of ship.

*Vxor.* I will not, for thi bydyng, 375  
Go from doore to mydyng.

*Noe.* In fayth, and for youre long taryyng  
Ye shal lik on the whyp.

43. *Vxor.* Spare me not, I pray the, bot euen as thou  
thyng,

Thise grete wordis shall not flay me.

*Noe.* Abide, dame, and drynk, 380  
For betyn shall thou be with this staf to thou stynk;  
Ar strokis good? say me.

*Vxor.* What say ye, Wat Wynk?

*Noe.* Speke!

Cry me mercy, I say!

*Vxor.* Therto say I nay.

385

*Noe.* Bot thou do, bi this day!

Thi hede shall I breke.

44. *Vxor.* Lord, I were at ese, and hertely full hoylle,  
Might I onys haue a measse of wedows coyll;  
For thi saull, without lese, shuld I dele penny doyll, 390  
So wold mo, no frese, that I se on this sole  
    Of wifis that ar here,  
For the life that thay leyd,  
Wold thare husbandis were dede,  
For, as euer ete I brede, 395  
    So wold I oure syre were.

45. *Noe.* Yee men that has wifis, whyls they ar yong,  
If ye luf youre lifis, chastice thare tong:  
Me thynk my hert ryfis, both levyr and long,  
To se sich stryfis wedmen emong. 400  
    Bot I,  
As haue I blys,  
Shall chastyse this.

*Vxor.* Yit may ye mys,

Nicholl Nedy!

405

46. *Noe.* I shall make þe still as stone, begynnarr of  
blunder!  
I shall bete the bak and bone, and breke all in sonder.

[*They fight.*]

*Vxor.* Out, alas, I am gone! Oute apon the, mans  
wonder!

*Noe.* Se how she can grone, and I lig vnder;  
Bot, wife,

410

In this hast let vs ho,  
For my bak is nere in two.

*Vxor.* And I am bet so blo  
That I may not thryfe.

[*They enter the Ark.*]

47. *Primus filius.* Al whi fare ye thus, fader and moder  
both? 415

*Secundus filius.* Ye shuld not be so spitus, standyng  
in sich a woth.

*Tercius filius.* Thise *(floodis)* ar so hidus, with  
many a cold coth.

*Noe.* We will do as ye bid vs, we will no more be  
wroth,

Dere bairnes!

Now to the helme will I hent,  
And to my ship tent. 420

*Vxor.* I se on the firmament,  
Me thynk, the seven starnes.

48. *Noe.* This is a grete flood, wife, take hede.

*Vxor.* So me thoght, as I stode; we ar in grete  
drede; 425

Thise wawghes ar so wode.

*Noe.* Help, God, in this nede!

As Thou art stereman good, and best, as I rede,  
Of all;

Thou rewle vs in this rase,

As Thou me behete hase. 430

*Vxor.* This is a perlous case.

Help, God, when we call!

49. *Noe.* Wife, tent the stere-tre, and I shall asay  
The depnes of the see that we bere, if I may.

*Vxor.* That shall I do ful wysely. Now go thi way, 435

For apon this flood haue we flett many day  
With pyne.

*Noe.* Now the water will I sownd:  
A! it is far to the grownd;  
This trauell I expownd  
Had I to tyne.

440

50. Aboue all hillys bedcyn the water is rysen late  
Cubettis fyfteyn, bot in a higher state  
It may not be, I weyn, for this well I wate:  
This forty dayes has rayn beyn; it will therfor abate 445  
Full lele.  
This water in hast  
Eft will I tast.  
Now am I agast,  
It is wanyd a grete dele.

450

51. Now are the weders cest, and cateractes knyt,  
Both the most and the leest.

*Vxor.* Me thynk, bi my wit,  
The son shynes in the eest. Lo, is not yond it?  
We shuld haue a good feest, were thise floodis flyt  
So spytus.

455

*Noe.* We haue been here, all we,  
Thre hundredth dayes and fyfty.

*Vxor.* Yei, now wanys the see;  
Lord, well is vs!

52. *Noe.* The thryd tyme will I pruse what depnes we  
bere.

460

*Vxor.* How long shall thou hufe? Lay in thy lyne  
there.

*Noe.* I may towch with my lufe the grownd evyn  
here.

*Vxor.* Then begynnys to grufe to vs mery chere;  
 Bot, husband,  
 What grownd may this be? 465

*Noe.* The hyllys of Armonye.

*Vxor.* Now blissid be He  
 That thus for vs can ordand!

53. *Noe.* I see toppys of hyllys he, many at a syght,  
 No thyng to let me, the wedir is so bright. 470

*Vxor.* Thise ar of mercy tokyns full right.

*Noe.* Dame, thou counsell me, what fowll best myght,  
 And cowth,  
 With flight of wyng  
 Bryng, with~~out~~ taryying, 475  
 Of mercy som tokynynge,  
 Ayther bi north or southe?

54. For this is the fyrst day of the tent moyne.

*Vxor.* The ravyn, durst I lay, will com agane sone;  
 As fast as thou may, cast hym furth, haue done; 480  
 He may happyn today com agane or none  
 With grath.

*Noe.* I will cast out also  
 Dowfys oone or two.  
 Go youre way, go, 485  
 God send you som wathe!

55. Now ar thise fowles flon into seyr countré;  
 Pray we fast ichon, kneland on our kne,  
 To Hym that is alone worthiest of degré,  
 That He wold send anone oure fowles som fee 490  
 To glad vs.

*Vxor.* Thai may not fayll of land,  
 The water is so wanand.

*Noe.* Thank we God Allweldand,  
 That Lord that made vs! 495

56. It is a wonder thyng, me thynk, sothle,  
 Thai ar so long taryng, the fowles that we  
 Cast out in the mornyng.

*Vxor.* Syr, it may be  
 Thai tary to thay bryng.  
*Noe.* The ravyn is a-hungrye  
 Allway; 500  
 He is without any reson;  
 And he fynd any caryon,  
 As peraventure may be fon,  
 He will not away.

57. The dowfe is more gentill, her trust I vntew, 505  
 Like vnto the turtill, for she is ay trew!

*Vxor.* Hence bot a litill she comys, lew, lew!  
 She bryngys in her bill som novels new;  
 Behald!  
 It is of an olif tre 510  
 A branch, thynkys me.  
*Noe.* It is soth, perde,  
 Right so is it cald.

58. Doufe, byrd full blist, fayre myght the befall!  
 Thou art trew for to trist, as ston in the wall; 515  
 Full weil I it wist thou wold com to thi hall.

*Vxor.* A trew tokyn ist we shall be sauyd all:  
 For whi?  
 The water, syn she com,  
 Of depnes plom 520  
 Is fallen a fathom  
 And more, hardly.

59. *Primus filius.* Thise floodis ar gone, fader, behold.  
*Secundus filius.* Ther is left right none, and that be  
 ye bold.  
*Tercius filius.* As still as a stone oure ship is stold. 525

Noe. Apon land here anone that we were, sayn I wold,  
 My childer dere,  
 Sem, Iaphet and Cam,  
 With gle and with gam,  
 • Com go we all sam, 530  
 We will no longer abide here.

60. Vxor. Here haue we beyn, Noy, long enogh  
 With tray and with teyn, and dred mekill wogh.  
 Noe. Behald on this greyn nowder cart ne plogh  
 Is left. as I weyn, nowder tre then bogh, 535  
 Ne other thyng;  
 Bot all is away;  
 Many castels, I say,  
 Grete townes of aray,  
 Flitt has this flowyng. 540

61. Vxor. Thise floodis not afright all this warl so wide  
 Has mevid with myght on se and bi side.  
 Noe. To dede ar thai dyght, proudist of pryde,  
 Euerich a wyght that euer was spyde  
 With syn, 545  
 All ar thai slayn,  
 And put vnto payn. .

Vxor. From thens agayn  
 May thai neuer wyn?

62. Noe. Wyn? No, iwis, bot He that myght hase 550  
 Wold myn of thare mys, and admynne thaym to grace;  
 As He in bayll is blis, I pray Hym in this space,  
 In heven hye with His to purvaye vs a place,  
 • That we,  
 With His santis in sight, 555  
 And His angels bright,  
 May com to His light:  
 Amen, for charite.

• *Explicit processus Noe.*

## NOTES

### 1

**Dialect:** North-East Midland of Lincolnshire.

**Inflexions:—**

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *hast* 131.

3 sg. *stondeb* 8.

3 pl. *calle* 32, *seye* 254; beside  
*dos* 157 (see note).

imper. pl. *comeb* 80, *dob* 82.

pres. p. *karoland* (in rime) 117, 150, 222.

strong pp. *wryte* 37, *fal* 195, *gone* 161.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: fem. nom. *she* 48; pl. nom. *bey* 32;  
poss. *here* 37; obj. *hem* 39.

The inflexions are very much simplified as compared with those of the Kentish *Ayenbyte* (III), but the verse shows that final unaccented *-e* was better preserved in the original than in our late MS., e.g.

*And specyaly at hygh(e) tymes* 13.

*For to see bys hard(e) dome* 173.

*And at he bre(e) day(e)s ende* 198.

*hat non(e) myst(e) leye yn graue* 217.

**Sounds:** *ø* is regular for OE. *ā*: *Rothe* 9, *wroth* 10, &c.; but the only decisive rime is *also* (OE. *alswā*): *to* (OE. *to*) 35-6, where *ø* after (*s*)*w* has become close *ō*; see Appendix § 8. ii, note.

**Syntax:** the loose constructions, e.g. ll. 15 ff. (note), 134-5, 138-9, 216-19, are characteristic of the period.

The history of this legend is traced by E. Schröder, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, vol. xvii, 1895, pp. 94 ff., and, more summarily, by Gaston Paris, *Les Danseurs maudits*, Paris 1900. The circumstances from which it sprang appear to belong to the year 1021. Kölbigk, in Anhalt, Saxony, was the scene of the dance. In 1074 it is referred to as 'famous' by a German chronicler, who records the healing of one of the dancers in 1038 through the miraculous powers of St. Wigbert.

Mendicants who suffered from or could simulate nervous diseases like St. Vitus's dance, were quick to realize their opportunity, and two letters telling the story were circulated

as credentials by pretended survivors of the band. Both are influenced in form by a sermon of St. Augustine of Hippo which embodies a similar story (Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. xxxviii, col. 1443). The first (Letter of Otbert), which claims to be issued by Peregrinus bishop of Cologne, spread rapidly through Western Europe. This was the version that Mannyng found in William of Waddington. The second (Letter of Theodric) makes Bruno bishop of Toul, afterwards Pope Leo IX, vouch for the facts. In its extant form it derives from the Latin 'Legend of St. Edith of Wilton' by the monk Goscelin, who wrote about the year 1080 (see A. Wilmart, *Analecta Bollandiana* lvi, fasc. iii and iv, 1938). This was the text that Mannyng used. A later English version is found in the dreary fifteenth-century *Life of St. Editha* (ed. Horstmann, ll. 4063 ff.).

1 ff. *games*: Dances and shows in the churchyard were constantly condemned by the Church in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1287 a synod at Exeter rules *ne quisquam luctas, chreas, vel alios ludos in honestos in coemeteriis exercere praesumat, praecipue in vigiliis et festis sanctorum*. See Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, vol. i, pp. 90 ff.

6. or *tabure bete*: Note the use of *bete* infin. as a verbal noun = *betyng*; cp. XI b 184-5.

10-12. 'And he (sc. a good priest) will become angered sooner than one who has no learning, and who does not understand Holy Writ.'

15 ff. *nought . . . none*: An accumulation of negatives in ME. makes the negation more emphatic. Here the writer wavers between two forms of expression: (1) 'do not sing carols in holy places', and (2) 'to sing carols in holy places is sacrilege'.

25-8. *yn bys londes*, &c. The cure of Theodric, not the dance, took place in England. Brightgiva is said to have been abbess of Wilton at the time, and 'King Edward' is Edward the Confessor (1042-66).

34-5. The church of Kölbigk is dedicated to St. Magnus, of whom nothing certain is known. The memory of St. Buckestre, if ever there was such a saint, appears to be preserved only in this story.

36. *bat pey come to*: Construe with *hyt* in l. 35.

37 ff. *Here names of alle*: The twelve followers of Gerlew are named in the Latin text, but Mannyng gives only the principal actors. The inconsistency is still more marked in the Bodleian MS., which after l. 40 adds:—

*De ouper twelve here names alle*

*Dus were pey wrete, as y can kalle.*

Otherwise the Bodleian MS. is very closely related to the Harleian sharing most of its errors and peculiarities.

44. *he prestes doghtyr of he tounne*, 'the priest of the town's daughter'. In early ME. the genitive inflexion is not, as in Modern English, added to the last of a group of words: cp. XIV d 10 *De Kynges sone of heuene* 'the King of Heaven's son'. The same construction occurs in VIII a 19 for *he Lordes loue of heuene* = 'for the love of the Lord of Heaven', and in VIII a 214; but in these passages the genitive is objective, and Modern English does not use the inflexion at all (note to I 83). The ME. and modern expressions have their point of agreement in the position of the genitive inflexion, which always precedes immediately the noun on which the genitive depends. Cp. notes to II 518, VI 23, and XIV d 1.

46. *Azone*: *ȝ* = *s* here. The name is *Azo* in the Latin.

55. *Beu<u>ne*: (derived from the accusative *Beuonem*) = *Beuo* of I. 59 and *Beuolyne* of I. 62. The form is properly *Bovo* not *Bevo*. Considerable liberties were taken with proper names to adapt them to metre or rime: e.g. I. 52 *Merswynde*; I. 63 *Merswyne*; cp. note to I. 246. This habit, and frequent miscopying, make it difficult to rely on names in mediaeval stories.

61. *Quid stamus? Cur non imus [hinc]?*: Terence, *Eunuchus*, I. 465.

65. *Grysly*: An error for *Gerlew*, Latin *Gerleuus*, from Low German *Gérlef* = OE. *Gárlaf*.

83. *for Crystys awe*: In Modern English a phrase like *Christ's awe* could mean only 'the awe felt by Christ'. But in OE. *Cristes ege*, or *ege Cristes*, meant also 'the awe of Christ (which men feel)', the genitive being objective. In ME. the word order *eie Cristes* is dropped, but *Cristes eie* (or *awe*, the Norse form) is still regular for '(men's) fear of Christ'. Hence formal ambiguities like *he Lordes loue of heuene* VIII a 19, which actually means '(men's) love of the Lord of Heaven', but grammatically might mean 'the Lord of Heaven's love (for men)'—see note to I. 44 above.

96-7. The Latin Letter of Theodric in fact has *ab isto officio ex Dei nutu amodo* (henceforth) *non cesseris*.

127. *a saue*: lit. 'have safe', i.e. 'rescue'. *Saue* is here adj.

128-9. *ys*: *flessh*: The rime requires the alternative forms *es* (as in I. 7) and *fles(s)*. Cp. note to VII 4.

132. *ȝow þar nat aske*: 'There is no need for you to ask': *ȝow* is dative after the impersonal *þar*.

156-7. *werynes*: *dos*. The rime is false. Perhaps Mannynge wrote: *As many body for goyng es* [sc. *wery*], and a copyist misplaced *es*, writing: *As many body es for goyng*. If *body es* were read as *bodyes*, a new verb would then be added.

169. Note the irony of the refrain. The Letter of Otbert adds the picturesque detail that they gradually sank up to their waists in the ground through dancing on the same spot.

172. *De Emperoure Henry* : Probably Henry II of Germany, Emperor from 1014 to 1024. A certain vagueness in points of time and place would save the bearers of the letter from awkward questions.

188-9. *banned* : *woned*. The rime (OE. *bannan* and *wunian*) is false, and the use of *woned* 'remained' is suspicious. Mannyngh perhaps wrote *bende* 'put in bonds': *wende* (= *ȝede* l. 191) 'went'; or (if the form *band* for *banned*(*e*) could be evidenced so early) *band* 'cursed': *wand*, pret. of *winden*, 'went'.

195. *fal yn a swone* : So MS., showing that by the second half of the fourteenth century the pp. adj. *aswon* had been wrongly analysed into the indef. article *a* and a noun *swon*. Mannyngh may have written *fallen aswone*. See Glossary, *s. v.* *aswone*.

234. *Wyth sundyr lepys* : 'with separate leaps'; but *Wyth* was probably added by a scribe who found in his original *sundyrlepys*, adv., meaning 'separately',—

"Kar suuent par les mains

Des malvais escrivains

Sunt livre corrumput.

240. *Seynt Edyght*. St. Edith (d. 984) was daughter of King Edgar, and abbess of Wilton. The rime is properly *Edit*: *Teodric*, for *t* and *k* are sufficiently like in sound to rime together in the best ME. verse; cp. note to XV g 27.

246. *Brunyng . . . seynt Tolous* : Latin *Bruno Tullanus*. Robert probably did not hesitate to provide a rime by turning Toul into Toulouse. Bruno afterwards became Pope Leo IX (1049-54).

254-5. *trowed* : *God*. Read *trōd*, a shortened form, revealed by rimes in North Midland texts. The identical rime occurs three times in Mannyngh's *Chronicle* (ed. Hearne, p. 339; ed. Furnivall, ll. 7357-8, 8111-12); and, again with substitution of *troud* for *trōd*, in *Havelok*, ll. 2338-9.

## II

**Dialect** : South-Western, with some admixture of Northern forms due to a copyist.

**Inflections** :—

- **VERB** : pres. ind.
  - 1 sg. *ichauē*, &c. (see note to l. 129).
  - 2 sg. *makest* 169, *worst* 170.
  - 3 sg. *geb* (in rime) 238; contracted *fint* 239, *last* 335, *sitt* 443, *stont* 556.
  - 2 pl. *ȝe beþ* 582.
  - 3 pl. *strikeþ* 252 (proved by rime with 3 sg. *likeþ*).
  - imper. pl. *make* 216, *chese* 217; beside *dop* 218.

pres. p. *berking* 286 (in rime with verbal sb.);  
*daunceing* (in rime) 298. The forms *kneland* 250, *liggeand* 388, are due to a Northern copyist.

strong pp. (various forms): *gv* (: *wv*) 196, *ygo* (: *mo*) 349, *ydone* (: -*none*) 76, *comen* 29, *come* 181, *ycomen* 203, *yhorn* 174, *bore* 210.

infin. Note *aski* (OE. *acsian*) 467 (App. § 13 vii).

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: fem. nom. *he* 408, 446, *hye* 337, beside *sche* 75, 77, &c.

pl. nom. *he* (in rime) 185, *hye* 91, beside *pai* 32, 69, &c.; poss. *her* 'their' 87, 413, 415; obj. *hem* 69, &c.

NOUN: Note the plurals *honden* 79, *berien* 258.

The original text preserved final -e better than the extant MSS., e.g.

*And seyd<sup>ē</sup> þus be king<sup>ē</sup> to 119.*

*Pat noping helþ<sup>ē</sup> be no schal 172.*

*Al þe vi<sup>ē</sup> mast<sup>ē</sup> wal 357.*

*So, sir, as þe seyd<sup>ē</sup> nouþ<sup>ē</sup> 466.*

Sounds: ð for OE. ð is proved in rime: *biholde* (OE. *behaldan*): *gold* (OE. *göld*) 367-8 (cp. 467-8); and *yhote* (OE. *għātēn*): *note* (OFr. *note*) 601-2.

The rime *frut* : *lite* 257-8 points to original *frut* : *lut* (OE. *lyt*), with Western ï, from OE. ī, riming with OFr. ï.

1-22. These lines, found also in *Lai le Freine*, would serve as preface to any of the Breton lays, with the couplet ll. 23-4 as the special connecting link. In the Auchinleck MS., *Orfeo* begins on a fresh leaf at l. 25, without heading or capitals to indicate that it is a new poem. The leaf preceding has been lost. There is good reason to suppose that it contained the lines supplied in the text from the Harleian MS.

4. *frely*, 'goodly': *Lai le Freine* has *ferly* 'wondrous'.

12. MS. *moost to lowe*: means 'most (worthy) to be praised', and there are two or three recorded examples of *to lowe* = *to alowe* in this sense. But MS. Ashmole and the corresponding lines in *Lai le Freine* point to *most o lowe* 'mostly of love' as the common reading. The typical 'lay' is a poem of moderate length, telling a story of love, usually with some supernatural element, in a refined and courtly style.

13. *Brytayn*, 'Brittany': so *Brytouns* 16 = 'Bretons'. Cp. Chaucer, *Franklin's Tale, Prologue*, beginning

*Thise olde gentil Britons in his dayes*

*Of diverse aventures maden layes*

*Rymeyed in his firste Briton tonge,*

*Whiche layes with his instruments they songe, &c*

20. The curious use of *it* after the plural *layes* is perhaps not original. *Lai le Freine* has: *And maked a lay and yaf it name.*

26. *In Inglongd*: an alteration of the original text to give local colour. Cp. ll. 49-50 and l. 478.

29-30. *Pluto*: the King of Hades came to be regarded as the King of Fairyland; cp. Chaucer, *Merchant's Tale*, l. 983 *Pluto that is the kyng of fairye.* The blunder by which Juno is made a king is apparently peculiar to the Auchinleck copy.

33-46. These lines are not in the Auchinleck MS., but are probably authentic. Otherwise little prominence would be given to Orfeo's skill as a harper.

41 ff. A confused construction: *In þe world was never man born* should be followed by *(þat) he (ne) schulde þinke*; but the writer goes on as if he had begun with 'every man in the world'. *And* = 'if'.

46. *toy and* overload the verse, and are probably an unskilful addition to the text.

49-50. These lines are peculiar to the Auchinleck MS., and are clearly interpolated; cp. l. 26 and l. 478. Winchester was the old capital of England, and therefore the conventional seat of an English king.

57. *comsing*: The metre points to a disyllabic form *comsing* here, and to *comsi* in l. 247.

80. *it bled wete*: In early English the clause which is logically subordinate is sometimes made formally co-ordinate. More normal would be *þat (it) bled wete* 'until (or so that) it bled wet'; i.e. until it was wet with blood.

82. *reuey(se)d* or some such form of *ravished* is probably right. *reneyd* 'apostate' is a possible reading of the MS., but does not fit the sense. *N.E.D.* suggests *remueed*.

102. *what is te?*: 'What ails you?'; cp. l. 115. *Te* for *þe* after *s* of *is*. Such modifications are due either to dissimilation of like sounds, as *þ:s* which are difficult in juxtaposition; or to assimilation of unlike sounds, as *þatow* 165, for *þat þow*.

115. 'What ails you, and how it came about?'; cp. l. 102.

129. *ichil* = *ich wille*; and so *ichauue* 209, *ichum* 382, *ichot* XV b 23. These forms, reduced to *chill*, *cham*, &c., were still characteristic of the Southern dialect in Shakespeare's time: cp. *King Lear*, IV. vi. 239 *Chill not let go, Zir.*

131. *þat nouȝt nis*: 'That cannot be'; cp. l. 457 *þat nouȝt nere.*

157-8. *þalays*: *ways*. The original rime was perhaps *þalys*: *wys* 'wise'.

170. 'Wherever you may be, you shall be fetched.'

201-2. *barouns*: *renouns*. Forms like *renouns* in rime are usually taken over from a French original.

215. The overloaded metre points to a shorter word like *wite* for *understand*.

216. *Make you þan a parlement*: *þou* is not nom., but dat. 'for yourselves'. Observe that *Orfeo* acts like a constitutional English king.

241. *þe fowe and gris*: A half translation of OFr. *vair et gris*. *Vair* (Lat. *varius*) was fur made of alternate pieces of the grey back and white belly of the squirrel. Hence it is rendered by *fowe*, OE. *fāg* 'varicolor'. *Gris* is the grey back alone, and the French word is retained for the rime with *biis*, which was probably in the OFr. original.

258. *berien*: The MS. may be read *berren*, but as this form is incorrect it is better to assume that the *i* has been carelessly shaped by the scribe.

289. *him se*, 'see (for himself)', and similarly *slep þou þe* xv 13. This reflexive use of the dative pronoun, which cannot be reproduced in a modern rendering, is common in OE. and ME., especially with verbs of motion; cp. note to xv 24. But distinguish *went him* 475, 501, where *him* is accusative, not dative (OE. *wente hine*), because the original sense of *went* is 'turned', which naturally takes a reflexive object.

342. *me no reche* = *I me no reche*. The alternative would be the impersonal *me no rechep*.

343. *also spac* = *also bliue* 142 = *also swiþe* 574: 'straight-way', &c.

363. MS. *auowed* (or *anowed*) is meaningless here. *Anow(rn)ed*, or the doubtful by-form *anow(r)ed* 'adorned', is probably the true reading.

382. The line is too long—a fault not uncommon where direct speech is introduced, e. g. l. 419 and 178. Usually a correct line can be obtained by dropping words like *quath he*, which are not as necessary in spoken verse as they are where writing alone conveys the sense. But sometimes the flaw may lie in the forms of address: l. 382 would be normal without *Parfay*; l. 419 may once have been:

*And seyd 'Lord, ȝif þi wille were'.*

There is no task more slippery than the metrical reconstruction of ME. poems, particularly those of which the extant text derives from the original not simply through a line of copyists, but through a line of minstrels who passed on the verses from memory and by word of mouth.

388. The line seems to be corrupt, and, as usual, the Harleian and Ashmole MSS. give little help. *Ful* can hardly be a sb. meaning 'multitude' from the adj. *full*. Some form of *fele* (OE. *fela*) 'a great number' would give possible grammar and sense (cp. l. 401), but bad metre. Perhaps *ful* should be deleted

as a scribe's anticipation of *folk* in the next line; for the construction *seize... of folk* cp. XVI 388; and *Hous of Fame*, Bk. iii, ll. 147 ff.

433. *Dei we nouȝt welcom no be*: Almost contemporary with *Sir Orfeo* is the complaint of an English writer that the halls of the nobles stood open to a lawyer, but not to a poet:

*Exclusus ad ianuam poteris sedere  
Ipse licet venias, Musis comitatus, Homere!*

'Though thou came thyself, Homer, with all the Muses, thou mightst sit at the door, shut out!', T. Wright, *Political Songs* (1839), p. 209.

446. *hadde he*, 'had she'. For *he* (OE. *hēo*) = 'she' cp. I. 408.

450. 'Now ask of me whatsoever it may be'. The plots of mediaeval romances often depend on the unlimited promises of an unwary king, whose honour compels him to keep his word. So in the story of Tristram, an Irish noble disguised as a minstrel wins Ysoldé from King Mark by this same device, but is himself cheated of his prize by Tristram's skill in music.

458. 'An ill-matched pair you two would be!'

479. The halting verse may be completed by adding *sum tyme* before *his*, with the Harley and Ashmole MSS.

483. *ybilt* of the MS. and editors cannot well be a pp. meaning 'housed'. I prefer to take *bilt* as sb. = *bild, build* 'a building'; and to suppose that *y* has been miswritten for *ȳ*, the contraction for *yn*.

495. *gan hold*, 'held'; a good example of the ME. use of *gan* + infinitive with the sense of the simple preterite.

515. An unhappy suggestion *home* for the second *come* has sometimes been accepted. But a careful Southern poet could not rime *home* (OE. *hām*) and *some* (OE. *sūm*). See note to VI 224.

518. *For mi lordes loue Sir Orfeo*, 'for my lord Sir Orfeo's love'. Logically the genitive inflexion should be added to both of two substantives in apposition, as in OE. *on Herodes dagum cyninges* 'in the days of King Herod'. But in ME. the first substantive usually has the inflexion, and the second is uninflected; cp. v 207 *kynges hous Arthur* 'the house of King Arthur'; and notes to I 44, VI 23.

544. *Allas! wreche*: *wreche* refers to the speaker, as in I. 333.

551. *hou it geh —*: The sense is hard to convey without some cumbrous paraphrase like 'the inexorable law of this world —'.

552. *It nis no bot of manes deþ*: 'There is no remedy for man's death', i.e. violent grief will do no good. Note *it nis* 'there is (not)'. In ME. the anticipated subject is commonly *it where we use there*.

565. *in ynome*: 'had taken up my abode'; *in* 'dwelling' = NE. 'inn'.

599. *herof* overloads the line and is omitted in the Ashmole MS.

### III

**Dialect:** Pure Kentish of Canterbury.

**Inflections** are well preserved, and are similar to those found in contemporary South-Western texts.

**VERB:** pres. ind. 3 sg. *multiplieþ* 1; contracted *ret* 3, 16.  
1 pl. *habbeþ* 2.

strong pp. *yyeue* 25, *yhote* 29.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** the new forms *she*, *they*, *their*, *them* are not used. 3 sg. fem. nom. *hi* 32, *hy* 45; poss. *hare* 33, beside *hire* 36; pl. nom. *hi* 58. Note the objective form *his(e)* = 'her' 32, 53 (twice); and = 'them' 7, 8, 28.

**NOUN:** plurals in *-en* occur: *uorbisnen* 2, *ken* 56. In *diaknen* 5, *-en* represents the dat. pl. inflexion.

**ADJECTIVE:** *onen* dat. sg. 4, *obren* dat. pl. 53, *þane* acc. sg. masc. 59, *þet* (word) nom. sg. neut. 57, show survivals rare even in the South at this date.

**Sounds:** Characteristic of the South-East is ē for OE. (West-Saxon) ī: *kertel* (OE. *cyrtel*) 39, *ken* (OE. *cī*) 56.

Old diphthongs are preserved in *greate* (OE. *grēat*) 9, *yeaf* 22. In *hyerof* 1, *yhyerde* 49, *hier* 2, *þieues* 18, *ye*, *ie* represent diphthongs developed in Kentish rather than simple close ē.

Initial *z* = *s* in *zome* 'some' 2, *zede* 'said' 12, *zuo* 'so' 17; and initial *u* = *f* in *uclē* 2, *uayre* 2, *uram* 4, *bevil* 41, evidence dialectical changes which occurred also in the South-West.

**Syntax:** The constructions are distorted by slavish following of the French original; see note to ll. 48–60.

3. Saint Germain of Auxerre (MS. *Aucerne*) is famous for his missions to Britain in the first half of the fifth century. This particular story is found in the *Acta Sanctorum* for July 31, p. 229.

16. St. John the Almoner (d. 616) was bishop of Alexandria. For the story see *Acta Sanctorum* for January 23, p. 115.

27–8. *and huanne he hit wiste þe ilke selue þet his hedde onderuunge*: an obscure sentence. Perhaps: 'and when he, the same who had received them (i. e. John, who had received the five hundred pounds), knew it' (sc. the truth).

38. This tale of Boniface, bishop of Ferentia in Etruria, is told in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, Bk. i, chap. 9. Its first appearance in English is in the translation of the *Dialogues*

made by Bishop Wærferth for King Alfred (ed. Hans Hecht, Leipzig 1900, pp. 67 ff.).

48–60. The French original of the passage, taken from an elegant fourteenth-century MS., Cotton Cleopatra A.V., fol. 144a, will show how slavishly Dan Michael followed his source:—

• *Apres il fu un poure home, sicom on dit, qui auoit une vache; e oi dire a son prestre en sarmon que Dieu disoit en leuangile que Dieu rendoit a cent doubles quanque on donast por lui. Le prodomme du conseil sa femme dona sa uache a son prestre, qui estoit riches. Le prestre lu prist uolentiers, e lenuoit pestre auoec les autres quil auoit. Kant uint au soir, la uache au poure home sen uint a son hostel chies le poure homme, com ele auoit acoustume, e amena auoeques soi toutes les uaches au prestre, iukes a cent. Quant le bon home uit ce, si pensa que ce estoit le mot de leuangile que li auoit rendu; e li furent aiugiees devant son euesque contre le prestre. Cest ensample moustre bien que misericorde est bone marchande, car ele multiplie les biens temporels.*

58–9. ‘And they were adjudged to him before his bishop against the priest’, i.e. the bishop ruled that the poor man should have all the cows.

The French *fabliau* ‘Brunain’ takes up the comic rather than the moral aspect of the story. A peasant, hearing the priest say that gifts to God are doubly repaid, thought it was a favourable opportunity to give his cow Blérain—a poor milker—to the priest. The priest ties her with his own cow Brunain. To the peasant’s great joy, the unprofitable Blérain returns home, leading with her the priest’s good cow.

#### IV

**Dialect:** Northern of Yorkshire.

**Inflections:** are reduced almost as in Modern English.

**VERB:** pres. ind. 1 sg. *settes* a 30; beside uninflected *sygh* a 69, *sob* a 69.

3 sg. *lastes* a 1.

1 pl. *flese* b 86: beside *we dreste* b 85.

3 pl. *lyse* a 61, *lufes* b 7, &c.; beside *þay take, þay halde* b 12, &c., which agree with the Midland forms.

pres. p. *lastand* a 25, *byrnand* a 26, riming with *hand*.

strong pp. *wryten* a 2.

Note the Northern and North Midland short forms *muse* ‘makes’ a 15, *tane* ‘taken’ a 53 (in rime).

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. *scho b1*; pl. nom. *bai a60*; poss. *bar a59* or *hair a65*; obj. *thaym b2*. The demonstrative *thire* 'these' at *b55*, *b59* is specifically Northern.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* is regularly represented by *ā*, not by *ā* of the South and most of the Midlands: *wa a2*, *euermare a20*, *balde* 'bold' *a51*; *bane* (in rime) *a54*.

*ā* becomes *ā* (*ā*?) in *gud(e) b9*, *b15*; and its length is sometimes indicated by adding *y*, as in *ruysand* 'vaunting' *b80*.

a. This poem is largely a translation of sentences excerpted from Rolle's *Incendium Amoris*, cc. xl-xli (Miss Allen in *Mod. Lang. Review* for 1919, p. 320). Useful commentaries are his prose *Form of Perfect Living* (ed. Horstmann, vol. i, pp. 3 ff.), and *Commandment of Love to God* (ibid. pp. 61 ff.), which supply many parallels in thought and phrasing; see, for example, the note to l. 48 below.

*a 1. feste.* Not the adj. 'fast', but pp. 'fastened', and so in l. 82.

*a 5. louyng*, 'beloved one', here and in l. 56. This exceptional use of the verbal noun occurs again in *my shernyng* 'what I yearn for', *a22*; *my couaytyng* 'what I covet', *a23*.

*a 9-12.* The meaning seems to be: 'The throne of love is raised high, for it (i. e. love) ascended into heaven. It seems to me that on earth love is crafty, for it makes men pale and wan. It goes very near to the bed of bliss (i. e. the bridal bed of Christ and the soul) I assure you. Though the way may seem long to us, yet love unites God and man.'

*a 24. louyng*, 'praise' here and in XVI 405, from OE. *lef* 'praise'; quite distinct from *louyng*, *lufyng*, in ll. 5 and 56.

*a 36. fle þat na man it maye*, 'which no man can escape'. See Appendix § 12, Relative.

*a 42. styll*, 'always' rather than 'motionless'.

*a 43-4.* Apparently 'the nature of love (*þat kyend*) turns from care the man (*þe lyfe*) who succeeds in finding love, or who ever knew it in his heart; and brings him to joy and delight.'

*a 48.* Cp. *Form of Perfect Living*, ed. Horstmann, vol. i, pp. 39-40: *For luf es stalworth als þe dede, þat slaes al lyuand thyng in erth; and hard als hell, þat spares noght till þam þat er dede.* In *The Commandment of Love* Rolle explains: *For als dede slas al lyuand thyng in his worlde, sa persite lufe slas in a mans sawle all fleshly desyres and erthly couaytise. And als hell spares noght til dede men, bot tormentes al þat commes bartill, als wa a man pat es in his [sc. the third, called 'Singular'] degré of lufe noght anly he forsakes þe wretched solace of þis lyf, bot als wa he couaytes to sofer pynes for Goldes lufe.* (Ibid. p. 63.)

*b 4. scho takes erthe*: From the *Historia Animalium* attributed to Aristotle, Bk. ix, c. 21. This is the authority referred to at l. 18, and at l. 33 (Bk. ix, c. 9); but the citations seem to be second hand, as they do not agree closely with the text of the *Historia Animalium*.

*b 21–2.* 'For there are many who never can keep the rule of love towards their friends, whether kinsmen or not.' MS. *ynesche* has been variously interpreted; but it must be corrected to *ynence*.

*b 47. strucyo or storke*: the ostrich, not the stork, is meant. Latin *struthio* has both meanings. On the whole, fourteenth-century translators show a fair knowledge of Latin, but the average of scholarship, even among the clergy, was never high in the Middle Ages. In the magnificent Eadwine Psalter, written at Canterbury Cathedral in the twelfth century, Ps. ci, 7 *similis factus sum pellicano* is rendered by 'I am become like to the skin of a dog' (= *pelli canis*), though an ecclesiastic would recite this psalm in Latin at least once every week. The records of some thirteenth-century examinations of English clergy may be found in G. G. Coulton, *A Medieval Garner* (London 1910), pp. 270 ff. They include the classic answer of Simon, the curate of Sonning, who, being examined on the Canon of the Mass, and pressed to say what governed *Te igitur, clementissime Pater, . . . supplices rogamus*, replied 'Pater, for He governeth all things'. As for French, Michael of Northgate, a shaky translator, is fortunate in escaping gross blunders in the specimen chosen (III); but the English rendering of Mandeville's *Travels* is full of errors; see the notes to IX.

*b 60. teches*: better *toches*, according to the foot-note.

## V

**Alliterative Verse.** The long lines in *Gawayne*, with *The Destruction of Troy*, *Piers Plowman*, and *The Blacksmiths* (xv h), are specimens of alliterative verse unmixed with rime, a form strictly comparable with Old English verse, from which it must derive through an unbroken oral tradition. While the detailed analysis of the Middle English alliterative line is complex and controversial, its general framework is describable in simple terms. It will be convenient to take examples from *Gawayne*, which shows most of the developments characteristic of Middle English.

I. The long line is divided by a caesura into two half lines, of which the second is the more strictly built so that the rhythm may be well marked. Each half line normally contains two principal stresses, e. g.

*And went on his wāy|| with his wīse one 6.*

*Pat schulde tēche hym to tōurne|| to pat tēne plāce 7.*

But three stresses are not uncommonly found in the first half line:

*Erþkez byled and brlke|| bi bbnkkes abolute 14;*  
and, even for the simpler forms in Old and Middle English, the two-stress analysis has its opponents.

2. The two half lines are bound together by alliteration. In alliteration *ch*, *st*, *s(c)h*, *sk*, and usually *sp*, are treated as single consonants (see lines 64, 31, 15, 99, 25); any vowel may alliterate with any other vowel, e. g.

*Dis britore is v̄gly|| with ērbez ouerḡowen 122;*  
and, contrary to the practice of correct OE. verse, *h* may alliterate with vowels in *Garwayne*:

*Hālde þe now þe h̄s̄e hōde|| pat Arþur þe rāst 229.*

*The hāpel hēldet hym frō|| and on his āx rēsted 263.*

3. In correct OE. verse the alliteration falls on one or both of the two principal stresses of the first half line, and invariably on the first stress only of the second half line. This is the ordinary ME. type:

*Pat schulde tēche hym to tōurne|| to pat tēne plāce 7;*  
though verses with only one alliterating syllable in the first half line, e. g.

*Boi I wyl to þe chāpel|| for chāunce þat may fālle 64,*  
are less common in ME. than in OE. But in ME. the fourth stress sometimes takes the alliteration also:

*Pay clōm̄ben bi clīffz|| þer clēnges þe cōlde 10.*

And when there is a third stress in the first half line, five syllables may alliterate:

*Mist mūged on þe mōr|| mālt on þe mōntes 12.*  
In sum, Middle English verse is richer than Old English in alliteration.

4. In all these verses the alliteration of the first stress in the second half line, which is essential in Old English, is maintained; but it is sometimes neglected, especially when the alliteration is otherwise well marked:

*With h̄s̄e helme on his hēde|| his lāunce in his hōnde (129; cp. 75),*  
where the natural stress cannot fall on *his*.

5. So far attention has been confined to the stressed syllables, around which the unstressed syllables are grouped. Clearly the richer the alliteration, the more freedom will be possible in the treatment of the unstressed syllables without undue weakening of the verse form. In the first two lines of *Beowulf*—

*Hwāt we Gārdēna|| in glārddgum*

*þlōdcýninga|| þrým gefrúnon—*

three of the half lines have the minimum number of syllables—four—and the other has only five. In Middle English, with

more elaborate alliteration, the number of unstressed syllables is increased, so that the minimum half line of four syllables is rare, and often contains some word which may have had an additional flexional syllable in the poet's own manuscript, e.g.

|| *he self(e) chāpel* 79.

|| *ār3e3 in hārl(e)* 209.

The less regular first half line is found with as many as eleven syllables; e.g.

*And syben he kluere3 bi a crāgge* || 153.

6. The grouping of stressed and unstressed syllables determines the rhythm. In Old English the falling rhythm predominates, as in || *Gāwain he nōble* 81; and historically it is no doubt correct to trace the development of the ME. line from a predominantly falling rhythm. But in fact, owing to the frequent use of unstressed syllables before the first stress (even in the second half line where they are avoided in the OE. falling rhythm) the commonest type is:

• || *and pe brōde 3dite3* 1, \*

• (x x  $\angle$  x  $\angle$  x)

which from a strictly Middle English standpoint may be analysed as a falling rhythm with introductory syllables (x x |  $\angle$  x  $\angle$  x), or as a rising rhythm with a weak ending (x x  $\angle$  x  $\angle$  | x). A careful reader, accustomed to the usage of English verse, will have no difficulty in following the movement, without entering into nice technicalities of historical analysis.

7. *The Destruction of Troy* is more regular than *Gawayne* in its versification, and better preserves the Old English tradition. *Piers Plowman* is looser and nearer to prose, so that the alliteration sometimes fails altogether, e.g. Extract a 95, 138. Such differences in technique may depend on date, on locality, or on the taste, training, of skill of the author.

**Dialect:** West Midland of Lancashire or Cheshire. (There is evidence of local knowledge in the account of *Gawayne's* ride in search of the Green Chapel, ll. 691 ff. of the complete text.)

**Vocabulary.** *Sir Gawayne* shows the characteristic vocabulary of alliterative verse.

It is rich in number and variety of words—Norse, French, and native. Besides common words like *race* 8, *wylle* 16, *kyrk* 128, *a3* 267 (which displace native English forms *rēs*, *wylde*, *chyrche*, *eie*), Norse gives *mug(g)ed* 12, *cayre3* 52, *scowtes* 99, *skayned* 99, *wro* 154, *brobe* 165, *fyked* 206, *snyrt* 244, &c. French are *baret* 47, *oritore* 122, *fylor* 157, *giserne* 197, *kauelacion* 207, *frounse* 238, &c. *Myst-hakel* 13, *orpelid* 164 are native words; while the rare *strybe* 237 and *rupeled* 226 are of doubtful origin.

Unless the alliteration is to be monotonous, there must be

many synonyms for common words like *man*, *kniȝt*: e.g. *burne* 3, *wyȝe* 6, *lede* 27, *gome* 50, *freke* 57, *tulk* 65, *knape* 68, *renk* 138, most of which survive only by reason of their usefulness in alliterative formulae. Similarly, a number of verbs are used to express the common idea 'to move (rapidly)': *boden* 9, *schowued* 15, *wonnen* 23, *ferked* 105, *romed* 130, *keuereð* 153, *whyrlande* 154, &c. Here the group of synonyms arises from weakening of the ordinary prose meanings; and this tendency to use words in colourless or forced senses is a general defect of alliterative verse. For instance, it is hard to attach a precise meaning to note 24, *gedereð* 92, *gloðes* 113, *wruxed* 123, *kest* 308.

The *Gawayne* poet is usually artist enough to avoid the worst fault of alliterative verse—the use of words for mere sound without regard to sense, but there are signs of the danger in the empty, clattering line:

*Bremly broþe on a bent þat broðe watȝ abouþe* 165.

**Inflections:** The rime *wafe : ta þe* 287-9 shows that organic final *-e* was sometimes pronounced in the poet's dialect.

**VERB:** pres. ind. 1 sg. *haf* 23; *leue* 60. "

2 sg. *spelleð* 72.

3 sg. *prayseð* 4; *tas* 237.

2 pl. *ȝe han* 25.

3 pl. *han* 345.

imper. pl. *gotð* (= *gōð*) 51, *cayreð* 52.

pres. p. normally *-ande*, e.g. *schaterande* 15; but very rarely *-yng*: *gruchyng* 58.

strong pp. *born* 2, *wonnen* 23; *tone* (= *taken*) 91.

The weak pa. t. and pp. show occasional *-(e)t* for *-(e)d*: *halt* 11, *fondet* 57, &c.

Note that present forms in *-ie(n)* are preserved, and the *i* extended to the past tense: *louy* (OE. *lufian*) 27, *louies* 31; *spuryed* 25.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. nom. *þay* 9; poss. *hor* 345, beside *her* 352; obj. *hem*, beside *hem* 353.

**Sounds:** *þ* for older *ð* is common, and is proved for the original by rimes like *more : restore* (OFr. *restorer*) 213-15, *bore : restore* 286-8. But *a* is often written in the MS.: *snow* 20, 166 (note rimes), *halden* 29, &c.

*u* for OE. *y*, characteristic of Western dialects, is found especially in the neighbourhood of labial consonants: *spuryed* (OE. *spyrian*) 25; *muryly* 268, 277; *munt* vb. 194 and sb. 282; beside *myntes* 284, *lyfte* 78, *hille* 13.

*u* for OE. *eo* (normal M.E. *e*) is another Western feature: *burne* 3, 21, &c., *rurde* 151.

*aw* for OE. *ēow* (normal M.E. *ew*, *ow*) as in *trawe* 44, *trawþe* 219, *rawþe* 136, is still found in some Northern dialects.

**Spelling:** *ȝ* (= *s*) is commonly written for final *s*: *bredeð* 3,

&c.; even when the final *s* is certainly voiceless as in *forȝ*, 'force', 'torrent' 105, (*as-)**leȝ* 'fear-less' 267. *tȝ* is written for *s* in monosyllabic verbal forms, where it indicates the maintenance of voiceless final *s* under the stress (see rimes to *hatȝ* 'has', VI 81): *watȝ* 'was' 1, *gotȝ* 'goes' 51, &c. In early Norman French *z* had the sound *ts*, and so could be written *tz*, as in *Fitz-Gerald* 'son (Mod. Fr. *fils*) of Gerald'. But later, French (*t*)*s* fell together with *s* in pronunciation, so that the spelling *tz* was transferred to original *s*, both in fourteenth-century Anglo-French and in English.

*qu-* occurs for strongly aspirated *hw-* in *guyte* 'white' 20, *quat* 'what' 111; but the alliteration is with *w*, not with *k(w)*, e.g.

*And wyth quetlyng awharf, er he wolde lyȝt* 152.

The spelling *goud* 5, 50, &c., for *gōd* 'good' may indicate a sound change.

Notable is the carefully distinguished use of *ȝ* in *ȝe*, but *y* in *yow*, e.g. at ll. 23-6.

3. *blessed hym, 'crossed himself'*; cp. XII b 86.

4-6. 'He gives a word of praise to the porter,—(who) kneeled before the prince (i.e. Gawayn) (and who) greeted him with "God and good day", and "May He save Gawayn!"—and went on his way, attended only by his man, who, &c.' Clumsiness in turning direct speech into reported speech is a constant source of difficulty in Middle English. For the suppressed relative cp. note to XIII a 36.

11. 'The clouds were high, but it was threatening below them.' *Halt for halet* pp. 'drawn up'.

16. 'The way by which they had to go through the wood was very wild.' Note the regular omission of a verb of motion after *shall*, *will*, &c. Cp. l. 64 *ȝ wyl to þe chapel*; l. 332 *ȝe schal . . . to my woneȝ*, &c.

28. 'If you would act according to my wit (i.e. by my advice) you would fare the better.'

34. *Hector, oper oper*, 'Hector, or any other'. Hector is quoted as the great hero of the Troy story, from which, and from the legends of Arthur, the Middle Ages drew their models of valour. The form *Hector* occurs in Old French.

35. 'He brings it about at the green chapel (that)', &c.

37. *dyngeȝ*: for MS. *dynneȝ*; Napier's suggestion.

41. 'He would as soon (lit. it seems to him as pleasant to) kill him, as be alive himself.'

43. 'If you reach that place you will be killed, I may warn you, knight.' Possibly *I*, *y*, has fallen out of the text after *y* of *may* (cp. VI 3), though there are clear instances in Old and Middle English where the pronominal subject must be understood from the context, e.g. I 168, VIII a 237, 273. Note the

transitions from plural *ȝe* to singular *þe* in ll. 42-3; and the evidence at l. 72 f. that *bou* could still be used in addressing a superior.

44. *Trawe ȝe me þat*: *trow* has here a double construction with both *me* and *þat* as direct objects.

56. 'That I shall loyally screen you, and never give out the tale that you fled for fear of any man that I knew.'

64. *for chaunce þat may falle*, 'in spite of anything that may happen'.

68-9. 'Though he be a stern lord (lit. a stern man to rule), and armed with a stave'. The short lines are built more with a view to rime than to sense.

72-4. 'Marry!' said the other, 'now you say so decidedly that you will take your own harm upon yourself, and it pleases you to lose your life, I have no wish to hinder you.'

76. *ryde me*: an instance of the rare ethic dative, which expresses some interest in the action of the verb on the part of one who is neither the doer of the action nor its object. Distinguish the uses referred to in the notes to ll. 289, XVg 24.

86. *Lepes hym*, 'gallops'. For *hym*, which refers to the rider, not the horse, cp. note to XVg 24.

92. *Gryngole*: the name of Gawain's horse. *gedereȝ þe rake* seems to mean 'takes the path'. No similar transitive use of 'gather' is known.

95. *he wayted hym aboute*, 'he looked around him'. Cp. l. 221 *wayteȝ*, and note to l. 121.

99. 'The clouds seemed to him grazed by the crags'; i. e. the crags were so high that they seemed to him to scrape the clouds. I owe to Professor Craigie the suggestion that *skayned* is ON. *skeina* 'to graze', 'scratch'.

102-4. 'And soon, a little way off'on an open space, a mound (as it appeared) seemed to him remarkable.'

107. *kacheȝ his caple*, 'takes control of his horse', i. e. takes up the reins again to start the horse after the halt mentioned at l. 100.

109. *his riche*: possibly 'his good steed'. The substantival use of an adjective is common in alliterative verse, e. g. l. 188 *þat schyre* (neck); 200 *þe schene* (axe); 245 *þe scharp* (axe); 343 *þat cortays* (lady). But it has been suggested that *brydel* has fallen out of the text after *riche*.

114. 'And it was all hollow within, nothing but an old cave.'

115 f. *he coupe hit noȝt deme with spelle*, 'he could not say (which it was)'. For *deme* 'to speak', &c., cp. VI 1, XVb 29-30.

118. *Wheber* commonly introduces a direct question and should not be separately translated. Cp. VI 205 and note to XI a 51.

121. *wysty is here*, 'it is desolate here'. Note *Wowayn* = *Wauwawn*, an alternative form of *Gawayn* used for the alliteration. The alternation is parallel to that in *guardian*: *warden*; *regard*: *reward* XIV c 105; *guarantee*: *warranty*; (bi)gyled 359: (bi)wyled 357; *werre* 'war' beside French *guerre*; *wait* 'watch' (as at l. 95) beside French *guetter*; and is due to dialectal differences in Old French. The Anglo-Norman dialect usually preserved *w* in words borrowed from Germanic or Celtic, while others replaced it by *gw*, *gu*, which later became simple *g* in pronunciation.

125. *in my fyne wyttes*: construe with *fele*.

127. *hat chekke hit bytyde*, 'which destruction befall !' *hat*... *hit* = 'which'. *chekke* refers to the checkmate at chess.

135. Had we not Chaucer's Miller and *The Reeves Tale*, the vividness and intimacy of the casual allusions would show the place of the flour-mill in mediaeval life. Havelok drives out his foes

*So dogges ut of milne-hous*; \*

and the Nightingale suggests as fit food for the Owl

*one frogge*

*Pat sit at mulne vnder cogge.*

These are records of hours spent by the village boys amid the noise of grinding and rush of water, in times when there was no rival mechanism to share the fascination of the water-driven mill.

137-43. 'This contrivance, as I believe, is prepared, sir knight, for the honour of meeting me by the way. Let God work His will, Lo ! It helps me not a bit. Though I lose my life, no noise causes me to fear.' It has been suggested that *wel o(r w)oo* 'weal or woe' should be read instead of the interjection *we loo !* But *Gawayn's* despair (l. 141) is not in keeping with ll. 70 f., 90 f., or with the rest of his speech. The looseness of the short lines makes emendation dangerous. Otherwise we might read *Hit helppes þe not a mote*, i.e. whatever happens, mere noise will not help the Green Knight by making *Gawayn* afraid ; or, alternatively, *hermes* 'harms' for *helppes*.

151. 'Yet he went on with the noise with all speed for a while, and turned away (to proceed) with his grinding, before he would come down.' The nonchalance of the Green Knight is marked throughout the poem.

155. *A Denez ax*: the ordinary long-bladed battle-axe was called a 'Danish' axe, in French *hache dunoise*, because the Scandinavians in their raids on England and France first proved its efficiency in battle.

158. *bi þat lace*, '(measured) by the lace'. In *Gawayne* (ll. 217 ff. of the full text) the axe used at the first encounter is described. It had :

*A lace lapped aboute, þat louked at þe hede,  
And so after þe halme halched ful ofte,  
Wyth tryed tasseles þerto tacched innoghe, &c.*

'A lace wrapped about (the handle), which was fastened at the (axe's) head, and was wound about the handle again and again, with many choice tassels fastened to it', &c.

159. *as fyrist*, 'as at the first encounter', i. e. when he rode into Arthur's hall. His outfit of green is minutely described at ll. 151 ff. of the full text.

162. *Sette þe stèle to þe stone*: i. e. he used the handle of the axe as a support when crossing rough ground. *stèle* = 'handle'; not 'steel'.

164. *hypped . . . strydes*: note the frequent alternation of past tense and historic present. So ll. 3-4 *passed . . . prayses*; 107-8 *kached . . . com . . . listes*; 280-1 *haldes . . . ges*, &c.

169 f. 'Now, sweet sir, one can trust you to keep an appointment.'

175. *þat þe falled*, 'what fell to your lot', i. e. the right to deal the first blow.

177. *oure one*, 'by ourselves'. To *one* 'alone' in early ME. the dative pronoun was added for emphasis, *him one*, *us one*, &c. Later and more rarely the possessive pronoun is found, as here. *Al(l)* was also used to strengthen *one*; so that there are six possible ME. types: (1) *one*, e. g. ll. 6, 50; (2) *him one*; (3) *his one*; (4) *al one* = *alone* l. 87; (5) *al him one*, or *him al one*; (6) *al his one*, or *his al one*.

181. *at a wap one*, 'at a single blow'.

183. 'I shall grudge you no good-will because of any harm that befalls me.'

189-90. 'And acted as if he feared nothing: he would not tremble (*dare*) with terror.'

196. He (Gawayn) who was ever valiant would have been dead from his blow there.'

200. It must not be supposed that the chief incidents of *Sir Gawayne* were invented by the English poet. The three strokes, for example, two of them mere feints and the third harmless, can be shown to derive from the lost French source, which has Irish analogues. See pp. 71-4 of *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (London 1916), by Professor Kittredge, a safe guide in the difficult borderland of folklore and romance.

207. 'Nor did I raise any quibble in the house of King Arthur.' On *kynges hous Arthor* see note to II 518.

222. *ryues*: the likeness of *n* and *u* in MSS. of the time makes it impossible to say whether the verb is *riue* 'to cleave', which is supported by l. 278, or *rine*, OE. *hrinan*, 'to touch'.

230. 'And look out for your neck at this stroke, (to see) if it may survive.'

233. *I hope*: here, and often in ME., *hope* means 'believe', 'expect'.

250. Gawyn appears to have carried his shield on his back. By a movement of his shoulders he lets it fall in front of him, so that he can use it in defence.

• 258. *foo*, 'fiercely', adv. parallel with *zederly*.

269. *ry(n)kande*, 'ringing'; Napier's suggestion for MS. *rykande*.

271-2. 'Nobody here has ill-treated you in an unmannerly way, nor shown you (courtesy)': the object of *kyd* being understood from *unmancrly mysboden*. *habbe* for MS. *habbe* is Napier's reading.

278-9. 'And cleft you with no grievous wound, (which) I rightly (merely) proffered you, because of the compact we made fast', &c. It is better to assume a suppression of the relative, than to put a strong stop after *rof* and treat *sore* as sb. object of *profered*. This latter punctuation gives *sore* the chief stress in the line, and breaks the alliteration and rhythm, which is correct as long as *sore* is taken with *rof*, so that its stress is subordinated.

286-7. 'Let a true man truly repay—then one need dread no peril.'

291. *weued*: perhaps not a weak pa. t. of *weave-woven*, but rather means 'to give', from OE. *wēfan*, 'to move'; *weue* in this sense occurs in *Gawayne* l. 1976.

294-5. 'And truly you seem to me the most faultless man that ever walked on foot.' The ME. construction, *on þe faultlest*, where *on* 'one' strengthens the superlative, is found in Chaucer, *Clerk's Tale* 212:

*Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne*,  
and still survives in Shakespeare's time, e.g. *Henry VIII*, II. iv. 48 f. *one the wisest prince*. It has been compared with Latin *unus maximus*, &c. In modern English the apposition has been replaced, with weakening of the sense: *one of the (wisest)*, &c.

298. *yow lakked . . . yow wanted*: impersonal, since *yow* is dative, 'there was lacking in you'.

319. 'Let me win your good-will', 'Pardon me'.

331. I have transposed MS. of *þe grene chapel at cheualrous knyȝteȝ*, because such a use of *at* is hardly conceivable. A copyist might easily make the slip. Cp. l. 35.

344. *Boþe þat on and þat ober*: Besides the Green Knight's young wife, there was a much older lady in the castle, 'yellow', with 'rugh, ronkled chekeȝ', and so wrapped up

*Wat noȝt watȝ bare of þat burde bot þe blake broȝes,*

*Þe tweyne yȝen, and þe nase, þe naked lyppes,*

*And þose were soure to se, and sellyly blered.*

*Gawayne* ll. 961-3.

350-1. 'And David afterwards, who suffered much evil, was (morally) blinded by Bathsheba.

352-6. 'Since these were injured with their wiles, it would be a great gain to love them well, and not believe them—for a man who could do it [cp. note to XI b 209]. For these (Adam, Solomon, &c.) were of old the noblest, whom all happiness followed, surpassingly, above all the others that lived beneath the heavens.' *mused* 'thought' is used for the rime, and means no more than 'lived'. ll. 354-6 amount to 'above all other men'.

## VI

**Dialect:** West Midland, like *Gawayne*.

The metre occasionally gives clear evidence that final flexional -e of the original has not always been preserved in the extant MS., e.g.

*þas cortaysly ȝe carp(ē) con* 21.

The most noteworthy verbal forms are:

pres. ind. 1 sg. *byswyke* 208 (once only, in rime);

2 sg. *þou quytes* 235;

3 sg. *leþe* 17; *tot* (= *lōs* = *tās* = *takes*) 153 (note).

1 pl. *we leuen* 65; *we calle* 70;

3 pl. *temen* 100 (and cp. ll. 151-2); *knawe* 145;  
but *þay gots* 150, *þyke* 213 (both in rime).

imperative pl. *dysplese* 62; *gos, doi* 161.

pres. p. *spornande* 3.

pp. *runne* (in rime) 163, beside *wroken* 15. &c.

Characteristic Western forms are *burne* 35 (OE. *beorn*); *vrþe* 82 (OE. *eorþe*).

5. 'Like bubbling water that flows from a spring', i.e. his wild words rise from a heart that can no longer contain its affliction.

11-12. 'You, who were once the source of all my joy, made sorrow my companion.'

15. 'From the time when you were removed from every peril'. The child died before she was two years old (l. 123).

22. 'I am but dust, and lack manners.' The MS. has *marere* 3 *mysse*, which has been rendered 'botcher's waste'; but the poet is contrasting his own ill-mannered speech with the Pearl's courtesy.

23. 'But the mercy of Christ and of Mary and of John'. The genitive inflexion is confined to the noun immediately preceding *mersy*, while the two following nouns, which are logically

genitives with exactly the same construction as *Crystes*, remain uninflected. For analogies see note to II 518.

36. *and*: MS. *in*. The sign for *and* is easily mistaken for *i* = *in*. Cp. note to XVII 42.

48. *Pat*, 'who'.

• 65. *pat . . . of*, 'from whom'; the later relative form of *quom* occurs at l. 93.

70. *Fenyx of Arraby*: the symbol of peerless perfection. Cp. Chaucer, *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, ll. 980-3

*Trewly she was to myn ye  
The soleyn Fenix of Arabye,  
For ther lyveth never but oon,  
Ne swich as she ne knew I noon.*

71. 'which was faultless in form'; *fleze* 'flew' is used with weakened sense because a bird is normally thought of as on the wing.

74. *folde vp hyr face*, '(with) her face upturned'; *folde* is pp.

91-2. 'And each would wish that the cr̄wns of the others were five times as precious, if it were possible to better them.'

97. *Poule*: the common OFr. and ME. form, as at VIII a 25, 270, XI b 80. But the rime with *naule* 'nail' (ON. *nugl*) points to the form *Paule* for the original. The reference is to 1 Corinthians vi. 15 and xii. 12 ff.

100. *hys body*, 'its body', 'the body'. *t(r)yste*, Morris's emendation, is supported by the frequency of the phrase *trewe and tryste*. MS. *tyste* could only be explained as = *tyste* 'tight', with *st* for *ht*, like *myste* = *myȝte* at l. 102. See Appendix § 6 (end).

106. 'Because you wear a ring on arm or finger.'

109-11. 'I (well) believe that there is great courtesy and charity among you.' The construction of the next line (which conveys an apology, cp. l. 62) is not clear owing to the following gap in the MS.; nor is it easy to guess the missing rime word, as *emong* can rime with OE. *-ung-* (e.g. with *ȝonge*, ll. 114, 175), or with OE. *-ang-*; see the note to XVII 400.

116. *stronge* may be adj. 'violent' with *worlde*, but is more likely adv. 'severely'.

124-5. Note the cumulation of negatives. *cowþes* has a double construction: 'You never knew how to please God nor pray to Him, nor (did you know even) the Paternoster and Creed. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed were prescribed by the Church as the elements of faith to be taught first to a child.'

137. Matthew xx. 1-16.

139. 'He represented it very aptly in a parable.'

141. *My regne . . . on hyȝt*, 'My kingdom on high'

145. *pys hyȝe*: the labourers. *This, these* are sometimes used in early English to refer to persons or things that have not been previously mentioned, but are prominent in the writer's mind.

Cp. xv b 4, 19; and the opening of Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Franklin's Tale* quoted in the note to II 13.

150. *pent*: in M.E. the final sound developed from OFr. *-et* (*e*) fell together with the sounds arising from OE. *-ig*, OFr. *ie*, &c. Hence *pent* or *peny* 186 (OE. *penig*); *reprent* 184 for *repreny*; *cortaysé* 120, 121, beside *cortaysye* 72, 84, 96. The acute accent, is editorial.

153. 'At midmorning the master goes to the market.' *tot* (= *tōs*) = *tās*, contracted form of *takes* 'betakes himself'; cp. *tone* = *taken* v 91. The spelling and rimes with *o* (which cannot develop normally from *ā* lengthened in open syllables because this lengthening is everywhere later than the change *ā* > *ō*) are usually explained as artificial. It is assumed that as Northern *bān* corresponded to Midland *bōn*, so from Northern *tā* 'take' an unhistorical Midland *tō* was deduced. But it is possible that the contraction of *take(n)*, and consequent lengthening *tā(n)*, is older than the ordinary lengthening *take* > *tāke*, and also older than the development of *ā* to *ō* in North Midland.

164. *I yow pay*: note the survival of the old use of the present to express future tense.

176. *bat at* *je moun*, 'what you can'. *At* as a relative appears usually to be from Old Norse *at*, with the same sense, and it is not uncommon in Northern English. But *bat at* here is more likely the normal development of *bat bat* > *bat tat* (note to II 102) > *bat at*.

179. *sumoun* is infin. not sb.: 'he had (them) summoned'; cp. note to VIII a 79.

192. 'It seems to us we ought to receive more.' *Vus hynk* is a remnant of the old impersonal construction of *hyncep* 'it seems'. In this phrase, probably owing to confusion with *we hynk(en)*, the verb often has no flexional ending; cp. l. 192. *vus oʒe* is formed by analogy, the verb being properly personal; cp. *must* vs XVII 292, 334.

200. *And*, 'If'.

205-8. *More*, which is necessary for the metrical form, is best taken as conj. 'moreover', 'further'; *weþer* introduces a direct question (note to V 118). *louly* is perhaps miswritten for *lauly* 'lawful', as the *Pearl-Gawayne* group often show the converse *au*, *aw* for normal *ou*, *ow*, e.g. *baue* for *bowe*, *trawþe* for *trowþe*. 'Further, is my power to do what pleases me with my own lawful?' The meaning is fixed by Matthew xx. 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?'

212. *mykeʒ*. In the few recorded examples *mik*, *myk* seems to mean 'an intimate friend'. Here it is used for the sake of rime in an extended sense 'chosen companion of the Lord'.

221 f. *Wheþer*, &c., 'Although I began (only) just now, coming into the vineyard in the eventide, (yet)', &c.

224. Note the rime (OE. *sūm*) with ON. *blóm(i)*, OE. *dōm*, *cōm*. Such rimes occur occasionally in Northern texts of the fourteenth century—never in the South.

233. Psalm lxii. 12 'Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work.'

237-40. Loosely constructed. 'Now, if you came to payment before him that stood firm through the long day, then he who did less work would be more entitled to receive pay, and the further *(it is carried)*, the less *(work)*, the more *(claim to be paid)*.'

249-51. On the meaning of these lines there is no agreement. Gollancz and Osgood interpret: 'That man's privilege is great who ever stood in awe of Him (God) who rescues sinners. From such men no happiness is withheld, for,' &c. Yet it is difficult to believe that even a poet hard pressed would use *dard to Hym* to mean 'feared Him'. One of several rival interpretations will suffice to show the ambiguities of the text: 'His (God's) generosity, which is always inscrutable (lit. lay hidden), is abundant to the man who recovers his soul from sin. From such men no happiness is withheld', &c. The sense and construction of *dard* (for which the emendation *fard*, pret. of *fere* 'to go', has been suggested, the rest of the interpretation following Gollancz), and the obscurity of the argument, are the chief obstacles to a satisfactory solution.

## VII

**Dialect:** Irregular, but predominantly North-West Midland; cp. v and vi.

**Inflexions:** — • •

**VERB:** pres. ind. 3 sg. *warys* 19, *has* 20.

3 pl. *ben* 11, *sayn* 182, *hauē* 31.

pres. p. *claterand* 137, *briuaund* 158, *leymonde* 153;  
beside *blowyng* 106, *doutyng* 114.

strong pp. *slydyn* 6, *stoken* 11.

The weak pp. and pa. t. have *-it*, *-(e)t* for *-(e)d*:  
*drēpit* 9, *suet* 24.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. nomin. *þai* 45; poss. *hor* 8, beside  
• *þere* 9, 10; obj. *hom* 24.

**Sounds and Spelling:** Northern and North Midland forms are *gwiles* (= *whiles*) 39, *hondgwile* 117; and *wysshe* 4 (note). West Midland indications are *buernes* 'men' 90, 91 = OE. *beorn* (but *buerne* 'sea' 159 = OE. *burn-* is probably miswritten owing to confusion with *buern* 'man'); and perhaps the spelling *u* in unaccented syllables: *mecull* 10, *watur* 119, *wintur* 124.

4. *wysshe* = *wisse* 'guide'. In the North final *sh* was commonly pronounced *ss*; cp. note to 1128-9, and the rimes in XVII 1-4. Conversely etymological *ss* was sometimes spelt *ssh*.

7-8. *strongest . . . and wisest . . . to wale*, 'the strongest . . . and wisest . . . that could be chosen' (lit. 'to choose').

15. *On lusti to loke*, 'pleasant to look upon'.

21 ff. A typical example of the vague and rambling constructions in which this writer indulges: apparently 'but old stories of the valiant *men* who *once* held high rank may give pleasure to some who never saw their deeds, through the writings of men who knew them at first hand (?) (*in dede*), *which remained* to be searched by those who followed after, in order to make known (*or to know?*) all the manner in which the events happened, by looking upon letters (i. e. writings) that were left behind of old'.

45. Benoît de Sainte-Maure says the Athenians rejected Homer's story of gods fighting like mortals, but charitably explains that, as Homer lived a hundred years after the siege, it is no wonder if he made mistakes:

*N'est merveille s'il i faillit,  
Quar onc n'i fu ne rien n'en vit.*

*Prologue*, ll. 55-6.

53-4. 'That was elegantly compiled by a wise clerk—one Guido, a man who had searched carefully, and knew all the actions from authors whom he had by him.' See Introductory note, pp. 68 f.

66-7. Cornelius Nepos was supposed to have found the Greek work of Dares at Athens when rummaging in an old cupboard (Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Prologue*, ll. 77 ff.).

157. Note the slovenly repetition from l. 151. So l. 159 repeats l. 152.

168-9. I have transposed these lines, assuming that they were misplaced by a copyist. Guido's Latin favours the change, and the whole passage will illustrate the English translator's methods:

*Oyleus uero Ajax qui cum 32 nauibus suis in predictam incidit tempestatem, omnibus nauibus suis exustis et submersis in mari, in suis viribus brachiorum nando semiuius peruenit ad terram; et, inflatus pre nimio potu aque, uix se nudum recepit in littore, ubi usque ad superuenientis diei lucem quasi mortuus iacuit in arena, [et] de morte sua sperans potius quam de uita. Sed cum quidam ex suis nando similiter a maris ingluvie iam erecti nudi peruenissent ad littus, dominum eorum querunt in littore [et] si forsitan euasisset. Quem in arena iacentem inueniunt, dulcibus uerborum fouent affatibus, cum nec in uestibus ipsum nec in alio possunt subsidio refouere.* (MS. Harley 4123, fol. 117 a—the bracketed words are superfluous.)

178. *Telamon* was not at the siege, and his name appears here and in l. 150 as the result of a tangle which begins in the confusion of Oyleus Ajax with Ajax the son of Telamon. In classical writers after Homer it is Oyleus Ajax who, at the sack of Troy, drags Cassandra from the temple of Minerva. This is the story in Dictys. Dares, like Homer, is silent. In Benoît de Sainte-Maure's poem (ll. 26211–16), the best MSS. name Oyleus Ajax as Cassandra's captor, but others have 'Thelamon Ajax', i.e. Ajax, the son of Telamon. Guido read Benoît in a MS. of the latter class, and accordingly makes *Telamonius Ajax* do the sacrilege. With the English translator this becomes *Telamon* simply (Bk. xxix, ll. 11993–7). So when later, in Bk. xxxi, he comes to describe the shipwreck, he replaces Guido's *Ajax* by *Telamon*, and spoils the story of Minerva's vengeance on the actual violator of her sanctuary.

## VIII

**Dialect:** South Midland, with mixture of forms.

a. **VERB:** pres. ind. 2 sg. *seist* 226, *wilnest* 256.

3 sg. *comaundeth* 16.

1 pl. *hauie* 118, *preye* 119.

2 pl. *han* 11, *wasten*. 127.

3 pl. *liggeth* 15, &c.; beside *ben* 50, *waste* 155.

imper. pl. *spynneth* 13.

pres. p. (none in a); *romynge* b 11.

strong pp. *bake* 187, *ybake* 278, *ybaken* 175.

Infinitives in -ie (OE. -ian) are retained: *erye* 4, *hatie* 52, *tilye* 229 (OE. *erian*, *hatian*, *tilian*).

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. nom. *þei* 126, &c., beside *hii* 15; poss. *her* 54; obj. *hem* 2.

**Sounds:** OE. *y* often shows the Western development, as in *huyre(d)* 108, 133, &c.; *abugge* 75, 159; beside *bigge* 275. So *Cornschulle* b 1. But such forms were not uncommon in the London dialect of the time.

b. The second extract has a more Southern dialectal colouring. Note especially the gen. pl. forms *lollarene* 31, *knauene* 56, *lorderie* 77, continuing or extending the OE. weak gen. pl. in -ena; and *menne* 29, 74, retaining the ending of the OE. gen. pl. *manna*.

The representation of unaccented vowels by *u* in *hure* (= 'their') 50, (= 'her') 53; (*h)us* 'his' 60, 101; *clerkus* 65, is commonest in Western districts. *h(w)* is no longer aspirated:

wanne 1, *werby* 35, MS. *eggen* 19; and conversely *hyf* 'if' 43, *his* 'is' 105.

a 9. *for shedyng*, 'to prevent spilling'; and so *for colde* 62 'as a protection against cold'; *for bollyng* 209 'to prevent swelling'; *for chillyng* 306, &c.

a 11. *Pat je han silke and sendal to sowe*: The construction changes as if Piers had begun: *Ich praye sow*, which is the reading in the C-text. The difficulty of excluding modern ideas from the interpretation of the Middle Ages is shown by the comment of a scholar so accomplished as M. Petit-Dutaillis: 'Il attaque les riches peu miséricordieux, les *dames charmantes aux doigts effilés*, qui ne s'occupent pas des pauvres' (*Soulèvement*, p. lxii). But there is no hint of satire or reproach in the text. The poet, always conventional, assigns to high-born ladies the work which at the time was considered most fitting for them. So it is reported in praise of the sainted Isabella of France, sister of St. Louis: 'Quand elle fust introduicte des lettres suffisamment, elle s'estudioit à apprendre à puurer de soye, et faisoit estolles et autres paremens à saincte Eglise'—'When she was sufficiently introduced to letters, she set herself to learn how to work in silk, and made stoles and other vestments for Holy Church.' (Joinville, *Histoire d. S. Louys*, Paris 1668, pt. i, p. 169.)

a 19. *for he Lordes loue of heuene*: cp. l. 214, and notes to I 44, I 83, II 518.

a 23. *on he teme*, 'on this subject'; *teme* 'theme' is a correct form, because Latin *th* was pronounced *t*. The modern pronunciation is due to the influence of classical spelling.

a 32. *affaite he*, 'tame for thyself'; cp. l. 64 (*I shal*) *bryng me* = 'bring (for myself)', and the note to II 289.

a 40-1. 'And though you should fint them,' let Mercy be the assessor, and let Meekness rule over you, in spite of Gain.' This is a warning against abuse of the lord of the manor's power to impose fines in the manorial court with the object of raising revenue rather than of administering justice. Cp. Ashley, *Introduction to English Economic History*, vol. i (1894), pt. ii, p. 266. For *maugre Medes chekes* cp. 151.

a 49. Luke xiv. 10.

a 50. *yuel to knowe*, 'hard to distinguish'.

a 72-5. These clumsy lines, which are found in all versions, exemplify the chief faults in *Piers Plowman*: structural weakness and superfluous allegory.

a 79. *I wil . . . do wryte my biqueste*, 'I will have my will written'; *make(n)*, *ger* (*gar*), and *lete(n)* are commonly used like *do(n)* with an active infinitive, which is most conveniently rendered by the passive; so *do wryte* 'cause to be written'; *dyd werche* 'caused to be made' I 218; *mad sumoun*

'caused to be summoned' VI 179; *gert dres vp* 'caused to be set up' X 16; *leet make* 'caused to be made' IX 223, &c.

*a 80. In Dei nomine, amen*: A regular opening phrase for wills.

*a 84. 'I trust to have a release from and remission of my debts*

- which are recorded in that book.'

*Rental*, a book in which the sums due from a tenant were noted, here means 'record of sins'.

*a 86. he*: the parson, as representing the Church.

*a 91. douȝtres*. In l. 73 only one daughter is named. In the B-text, Passus xviii. 426, she is called *Kalote* (see note to *b 2* below).

*a 94. bi he rode of Lukes*: at Lucca (French *Lucques*) is a Crucifix and a famous representation of the face of Christ, reputed to be the work of the disciple Nicodemus. From Eadmer and William of Malmesbury we learn that William the Conqueror's favourite oath was 'By the Face of Lucca!', and it is worth noting that the frequent and varied adjurations in Middle English are copied from the French.

*a 114. 'May the Devil take him who cares!'*

*a 115 ff. faitouries* (cp. II. 185 ff.), who feigned some injury or disease to avoid work and win the pity of the charitable, multiplied in the disturbed years following the Black Death. Statutes were passed against them, and even against those who gave them alms (Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, pp. 261 ff.). But the type was long lived. In the extract from *Handlyng Synne* (No. I), we have already a monument of their activities.

*a 141. 'And those that have cloisters and churches (i. e. monks and priests) shall have some of my goods to provide themselves with copes.'*

*a 142. Robert Renne-absolute*. The type of a wandering preacher; *posteles* are clearly preachers with no fixed sphere of authority, like the mendicant friars and Wiclit's 'poor priests'. Against both the regular clergy constantly complained that they preached without the authority of the bishop.

*a 186. Pat seten*: the MS. by confusion has *pat seten to seten to begge*, &c.

*a 187. pat was bake for Bayarde*: i. e. 'horse-bread' (l. 208), which used to be made from beans and peas only. *Bayard*, properly a 'bay horse', was, according to romance, the name of the horse given by Charlemagne to Rinaldo. Hence it became the conventional name for a horse, just as *Reynard* was appropriated to the fox. Chaucer speaks of *proude Bayard* (*Troilus*, Bk. i. 218) and, referring to an unknown story, *Bayard the blynde* (*Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, 860).

*a 221. Michi vindictam*: Romans xii. 19.

*a 224. Luke xvi. 9.*

a 229. Genesis iii. 19.

a 231. *Sapience*: the Book of Wisdom, but the quotation is actually from Proverbs xx. 4.

a 234. *Mathew with mannes face*. Each of the evangelists had his symbol: Matthew, a man; Mark, a lion; Luke, a bull; John, an eagle; and in early Gospel books their portraits are usually accompanied by the appropriate symbols.

a 235 ff. Matthew xxv. 14 ff.; Luke xix. 12 ff.

a 245. *Contemplatyf lyf or actyf lyf*. The merits of these two ways of life were endlessly disputed in the Middle Ages. In XI b Wyclif attacks the position of the monks and of Rolle's followers; and the author of *Pearl* (VI 61 ff.) takes up the related question of salvation by works or by grace.

a 246. Psalm cxxviii. 1.

a 264. Jusserand gives a brief account of the old-time physicians in *English Wayfaring Life*, pp. 177 ff. The best were somewhat haphazard in their methods, and the mountebanks brought discredit on the profession. Here are a few fourteenth-century prescriptions:

*For hym that haves the squynansy* ['quinsy'] :—

Tak a fatte katte, and fla hit wele and clene, and draw oute the guttes; and tak the grees of an urcheon ['hedgehog'], and the fatte of a bare, and resynes, and feinygreke ['fenugreek'], and sauge ['sage'], and gumme of wodebynde, and virgyn wax: al this mye ['grate'] smal, and farse ['stuff'] the catte within als thu farses a gos: rost hit hale, and geder the grees, and enoynt hym tharwith. (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. Wright and Halliwell (1841), vol. i, p. 51.)

*3yf a woud hund hat ybite a man* :—

Take tou(n)karsyn ['towncress'], and pulyole ['penny-royal'], and seþ hit in water, and ȝef hym to drynke, and hit schal caste out þe venym: and ȝif þou miste ['might'] haue of þe hundys here, ley hit þerto, and hit schal hele hit. (*Medical Works of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. G. Henslow, London 1899, p. 19.)

*A goud oynement for þe goute* :—

Take þe grece of a bor, and þe grece of a ratoun, and cattys grece, and voxis grece, and hors grece, and þe grece of a brok ['badger']; and take feþeruoye ['feverfew'] and eysyl ['vinegar'], and stampe hem togedre; and take a litel lynnesed, and stampe hit wel, and do hit þerto; and meng al togedre, and het hit in a scherd, and þerwith anoynte þe goute by the fuyre. Do so ofte and hit schal be hol. (Ibid., p. 20.)

¶ a 284. *Lammasse tyme*: August 1, when the new corn (l. 294) would be in. On this day a loaf was offered as firstfruits: whence the name, OE. *hlāf-mæsse*.

a 307 ff. Owing to repeated famines, the wages of manual labour rose throughout the first half of the fourteenth century. A crisis

was reached when the Black Death (1349) so reduced the number of workers that the survivors were able to demand wages on a scale which seemed unconscionable to their employers. By the Statute of Labourers (1350 and 1351) an attempt was made to force wages and prices back to the level of 1346. For a day's haymaking 1*d.* was to be the maximum wage; for reaping 2*d.* or 3*d.* Throughout the second half of the fourteenth century vain attempts were made to enforce these maxima, and the penalties did much to fan the unrest that broke out in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

*a* 309-10. From Bk. i of the *Disticha* of Dionysius Cato, a collection of proverbs famous throughout the Middle Ages.

*a* 321. Saturn was a malevolent planet, as we see from his speech in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, 1595 ff.

*a* 324. *Deth*: the Plague.

*b* 1. *Cornehulle*. Cornhill was one of the liveliest quarters of fourteenth-century London, and a haunt of idlers, beggars, and doubtful characters. Its pillory and stocks were famous. Its market where, if *The London Lickpenny* is to be credited, dealing in stolen clothes was a speciality, was privileged above all others in the city. See the documents in Riley's *Memorials of London*.

*b* 2. *Kytte*: In the B-text, Passus xviii. 425-6, *Kyte* is mentioned again:

*and rist with hat I waked*

*And called Kitte my wyf and Kalote my douzter.*

*b* 4. *lollares of London*: The followers of Wyclif were called 'Lollards' by their opponents; but the word here seems to mean 'idlers' as in l. 31. *lewedē herem̄ytes*: 'lay hermits': hermits were not necessarily in holy orders, and so far from seeking complete solitude, they often lived in the cities or near the great highways, where many passers would have opportunity to recognize their merit by giving alms. See Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, pp. 93 ff.

*b* 5. 'For I judged those men as Reason taught me.' Skeat's interpretation—that *made of* means 'made verses about'—is forced. The sense is that the idlers and hermits thought little of the dreamer, and he was equally critical of them.

*b* 6. *as ich cam by Conscience*: 'as I passed by Conscience', referring to a vision described in the previous Passus, in which Conscience is the principal figure.

*b* 10 f. *In hele and in vr̄nle*, 'in health and in my full senses', and *Romynge in reguembraunce* qualify me.

*b* 14. *Mowe oper morwen*, 'mow or stack'. For these unrelated words see the Glossary.

*b* 16. *haywarde*: by derivation 'hedge-ward'. He watched over enclosures and prevented animals from straying among the crops. Observe that ME. nouns denoting occupation usually

survive in surnames:—Baxter 'baker', Bow(y)er, Chapman, Dyer, Falconer, Fletcher 'arrow-maker', Fo(re)ster, Franklin, Hayward, Lister (= litster, 'dyer'), Palmer, Reeve(s), Spicer, Sumner, Tyler 'maker or layer of tiles', Warner 'keeper of warrens', Webb, Webster, Wright, Yeoman, &c.

*b* 20-1. 'Or craft of any kind that is necessary to the community, to provide food for them that are bedridden.'

*b* 24. *to long*, 'too tall': cp. B-text, *Passus xv. 148 my name is Longe Wille*. Consistency in such details in a poem full of inconsistencies makes it probable that the poet is describing himself, not an imagined dreamer.

*b* 33. *Psalm lxii. 12*.

*b* 45. *1 Corinthians vii. 20*.

*b* 46 ff. Cp. the note to *XI b 131f*. The dreamer appears to have made his living by saying prayers for the souls of the dead, a service which, from small beginnings in the early Middle Ages, had by this time withdrawn much of the energy of the clergy from their regular duties. See note to *XI b 140f*.

*b* 49. *my Seuene Psalmes*: the Penitential Psalms, normally vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii, in the numbering of the Authorised Version. The *Prymer*, which contained the devotions supplementary to the regular Church service, included the *Placebo*, *Dirige*, and the *Seven Psalms*: see the edition by Littlehales for the Early English Text Society.

*b* 50. *for hure soules of suche as me helpen*: combines the constructions *for he soules of suche as me helpen*, and *for hure soules bat me helpen*.

*b* 51. *vochen saf*: supply *me* as object, 'warrant me that I shall be welcome'.

*b* 61. *1 Thessalonians v. 15*; *Leviticus xix. 18*.

*b* 63. *churches*: here and in *I. 110* read the Norse form *kirkes* for the alliteration, as in *a 28, 85*. But the English form also belongs to the original, for it alliterates with *ch* at *a 12, 50*.

*b* 64. *Dominus*, &c.: *Psalm xvi. 5*.

*b* 83. *Symondes sone*: a son of Simon Magus—one guilty of simony, or one who receives preferment merely because of his wealth.

*b* 90. *Matthew iv. 4*.

*b* 103-4. *Simile est*, &c.: *Matthew xiii. 44*. *Mulier que*, &c.: *Luke xv. 8 ff.*

## IX

**Dialect:** South-East Midland.

**Vocabulary:** A number of French words are taken over from the original, e.g. *plee* 81, *ryot* 83, *violastres* 97, *saphire* 116, *gourdes* 139, *clowe gylofres* 157, *canell* 158, *avaled*

195, *trayne* (for *traynere*?) 222, *bugles* 256, *gowtes artelykes* 314, *distreynen* 315.

**Inflections:** Almost modern.

**VERB:** pres. ind. 3 sg. *schadeweth* 19, *turneth* 23.

3 pl. *ben* 4, *han* 14, *wexen* 22, *loue* 100.

• pres. p. *fle(e)lynge* 148, 252; *recordyngē* 317.  
strong pp. *ȝouen* 90, *begonne* 171.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. *hei* 5; *here* 71; *hem* 20.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* becomes *ā*: *hoot* 11, *cold* 31.

OE. *y* appears as *y* (= *i*): *byggynge* 90, *kyȝn* 'kine' 256; except regular *lefȝ* (hand) 69, 71, 72, where Modern English has also adopted the South-Eastern form of OE. *lyft*.

21-3. The French original says that the children have white hair when they are young, which becomes black as they grow up.

24-5. The belief that one of the Three Kings came from Ethiopia is based on Ps. lxviii. 31: 'Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.' In mediaeval representations one of the three is usually a negro.

27. *Emlak*: miswritten for *Euilak*, a name for India taken from *Havilah* of Genesis ii. 11.

28. *bat is*: *þe more*: *Ynde* has probably fallen out of the text after *is*.

34-5. *ȝalow cristall draweth* *<to>* *colour lyke oylle*: the insertion of *to* is necessary to give sense, and is supported by the French: *cristal iaunastre trehant a colour doile*. (MS. Harley 4383, f. 34b.)

36-7. The translation is not accurate. The French has: *et appelle homme les dyamantz en ceo pais 'Hamese'*.

64 ff. It was supposed that the pearl-bearing shell-fish opened at low tide to receive the dew-drops from which the pearls grew.

74. *ȝif ȝou lyke*, 'if it please you', impersonal = French *si vous plést*.

75. *þe Lapidarye*, Latin *Lapidarium*, was a manual of precious stones, which contained a good deal of pseudo-scientific information about their natures and virtues, just as the *Bestiary* summed up popular knowledge of animals. A Latin poem by Marbod bishop of Rennes (d. 1123) is the chief source of the mediaeval lapidaries, and, curiously enough, there is a French prose text attributed by so intimate an authority as Jean d'Outremeuse to Mandeville himself. Several Old French texts have been edited by L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires Français du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1882. Their high repute may be judged from the inclusion of no less than seven copies in the library of Charles V of France (d. 1380); and it is surprising that no complete ME. version is known. But much of the matter was absorbed into encyclopaedic

works like the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomaeus, which Trevisa translated.

97. Mistranslated. The French has: *qui sont violastre, ou pluis broun qe violettes.*

100-1. *But in soth to me*: French: *Mes endroit de moy*, 'but for my part'; the English translator has rendered *en droit* separately.

108. *before*: the context requires the sense 'because', but the translator would hardly have used *before* had he realized that ll. 108-9 correspond to a subordinate clause in the French, and do not form a complete independent sentence. He was misled by the bad punctuation of some French MSS., e.g. Royal 20 B. x and (with consequent corruption) Harley 4383.

136. *Cathaye*: China. See the classic work of Colonel Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 2 vols., London 1866. The modernization of the Catalan map of 1375 in vol. i gives a good idea of Mandeville's geography.

142. *withouten wolle*: the story of the vegetable lamb is taken from the *Voyage* of Friar Odoric, which is accessible in Hakluyt's *Voyages*. Hakluyt's translation is reprinted, with the Eastern voyages of John de Plano Carpini (1246) and of William de Rubruquis (1253), in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. A. W. Pollard, London 1900. The legend probably arose from vague descriptions of the cotton plant; and Mandeville makes it still more marvellous by describing as without wool the lamb which had been invented to explain the wool's existence.

143-4. *Of hat frute I haue eten*: This assertion seems to be due to the English translator. The normal French text has simply: *et cest bien grant meruaille de ceo fruit, et si est grant oure [= œuvre] de nature* (MS. Royal 20 B. x, f. 70 b).

147. *the Bernakes*: The barnacle goose—introduced here on a hint from Odoric—is a species of wild goose that visits the Northern coasts in winter. It was popularly supposed to grow from the shell-fish called 'barnacle', which attaches itself to floating timber by a stalk something like the neck and beak of a bird, and has feathery filaments not unlike plumage. As the breeding place of the barnacle goose was unknown, and logs with the shell-fish attached were often found on the coasts, it was supposed that the shell-fish was the fruit of a tree, which developed in the water into a bird. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica*, I. xv, reproves certain casuistical members of the Church who ate the barnacle goose on fast-days on the plea that it was not flesh; but himself vouches for the marvel. The earliest reference in English is No. 11 of the Anglo-Saxon *Riddles*, of which the best solution is 'barnacle goose'. For a full account see Max Müller's *Lectures on the Science of Language*, vol. ii, pp. 583-604.

157. *grete notes of Ynde*, 'coco-nuts'.

163-4. *Goth and Magoth*: see Ezekiel xxxviii and xxxix. The forms of the names are French.

170. *God of Nature*: Near the end of the *Travels* it is explained that all the Eastern peoples are Deists, though they have not the light of Christianity: *hei beleeven in God þat formede all thing and made the world, and clepen him 'God of Nature'*.

191-2. *þat hei schull not gon out on no syde, but be the cost of hire lond*: the general sense requires the omission of *but*, which has no equivalent in the original French text: *qils ne(n)t issent fors deuers la coste de sa terre* (MS. Sloane 1464, f. 139 b). But some MSS. like Royal 20 B. x have *fors qe deuers*, a faulty reading that must have stood in the copy used by the Cotton translator. Cp. note to l. 108.

199-200. *a four grete myle*: renders the French *iiii grants lieus*. There is no 'great mile' among English measures.

209 ff. In the Middle Ages references to the Jews are nearly always hostile. They were hated as enemies of the Church, and prejudice was hardened by stories, like that in the text, of their vengeance to come, or of ritual murder, like Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. England had its supposed boy martyrs, William of Norwich (d. 1144), and Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1255) whom the Prioress invokes:

*O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slain also  
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,  
For it is but a litel while ago,  
Preye eek for us, &c.*

Religion was not the only cause of bitterness. The Jews, standing outside the Church and its laws against usury, at a time when financial needs had outgrown feudal revenues, became the money-lenders and bankers of Europe; and with a standard rate of interest fixed at over 40 per cent., debtors and creditors could hardly be friends. In England the Jews reached the height of their prosperity in the twelfth century, so that in 1188 nearly half the national contribution for a Crusade came from them. In the thirteenth century their privileges and operations were cut down, and they were finally expelled from the country in 1290 (see J. Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, 1893). The Lombards, whose consciences were not nice, took their place as financiers in fourteenth-century England.

222. *trayne*: read *laynere*, OFr. *taignere* 'a burrow'.

237-8. The cotton plant has already given us the vegetable lamb (l. 142). This more prosaic account is taken from the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotalem*: '*in Bactriacen . . . penitus ad abditos Seres, quod genus hominum soliis arborum decerpendo lanuginem ex silvestri vellere vestes detexunt*' (Julius Valerius.

ed. B. Kübler, p. 194). From the same text come the hippopotami, the bitter waters (Kübler, p. 195), and the griffins (Kübler, p. 217). The *Letter of Alexander* was translated into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth century.

254 ff. *talouns* etc.: In the 1725 edition there is a reference to 'one 4 Foot long in the Cotton Library' with the inscription, *Griphi Unguis Divo Cuthberto Dunelmensi sacer*, 'griffin's talon, sacred to St. Cuthbert of Durham'. This specimen is now in the Mediaeval Department of the British Museum, and is really the slim, curved horn of an ibex. The inscription is late (sixteenth century), but the talon was catalogued among the treasures of Durham in the fourteenth century.

260. *Prestre John*: Old French *Prestre Jean*, or 'John the Priest', was reputed to be the Christian ruler of a great kingdom in the East. A rather minatory letter professing to come from him reached most of the princes of Europe, and was replied to in all seriousness by Pope Alexander III. Its claims include the lordship over the tribes of Gog and Magogg whom Alexander the Great walled within the mountains. Official missions were sent to establish relations with him; but neither in the Far East nor in Northern Africa, where the best opinion in later times located his empire, could the great king ever be found. The history of the legend is set out by Yule in the article *Prester John* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

261. *Yle of Pentexoire*: to Mandeville most Eastern countries are 'isles'. *Pentexoire* in the French text of Odoric is a territory about the Yellow River (Yule, *Cathay*, vol. i, p. 146).

262 ff.: For comparison the French text of the Epilogue is given from MS. Royal 20 B. x, f. 83 a, the words in <> being supplied from MS. Sloane 1464:

'Il y a plusours autres diuers pais, et moutz dautres meruailles par de la, qe ieo nay mie tout veu, si nen saueroye proprement parler. Et meismement el pais en quel iay este, y a plusours diuersetes dont ieo ne fais point el mencion, qar trop serroit long chose a tout deuiser. Et pur ceo qe ieo vous ay deuisez dascuns pais, vous doit suffire quant a present. Qar, si ieo deuisoie tout quantqez y est par de la, vn autre qj se peneroit et trauaileroit le corps pur aler en celles marches, et pur sercher la pais, serroit empeschez par mes ditz a recompter nuls choses estranges, qar il ne porroit rien dire de nouvelle, en quoy ly oyantz y puissent prendre solaces. Et lem dit toutdis qe choses nouvelles pleisent. Si men taceray a tant, qaunz plus recompter nuls diuersetez qj soyent par de la, a la fin qe cis qj vourra aler en celles parties y troeue assez a dire.'

'Et ieo, Iohan Maundeuille dessudit, qj men party de nos pais et passay le mer lan de grace mil cccxxii<sup>de</sup>; qj moint terre et moint passage et moint pays ay puis cerchez; et qy ay este en

moiit bone compaignie et en molt beal fait, come bien qe ieo  
(ne fuisse dignes, et) ne feisse vncques ne beal fait ne beal  
emprise; et qd meintenant suy venuz a repos maugre mien, pur  
goutes artetikes qd moy destreignont; en preignan solacz en mon  
cheitif repos, en recordant le temps passe, ay cestes choses  
compilez et mises en escript, si come il me poet souuenir, lan de  
grace mil ccc.lvi<sup>me</sup>, a xxxiiii<sup>te</sup> an qe ieo men party de noz pais.

‘Si pri a toutz les lisauntz, si lour plest, qils voillent Dieu prier  
pur moy, et ieo priera pur eux. Et toutz cils qd pur moy dirrount  
vne *Paternoster* qd Dieu me face remissioune de mes peccches, ieo  
les face parteners et lour otroie part dez toutz les bons pelrinages  
et dez toutz les bienfaitz qd ieo feisse vnges, et qd ieo ferray, si  
Dieu plest, vncqore iusques a ma fyn. Et pry a Dieu, de qy  
toute bien et toute grace descent, qil toutz les lisantz et oyantz  
Cristiens voille de sa grace reemplir, et lour corps et les almes  
sauuer, a la glorie et loenge de ly qd est trinz et vns, et saunz  
comencement et saunz fin, saunz qualite bons, saunz quantite  
grantz, en toutz lieus present et toutz choses contenant, et qy nul  
bien ne poet amender ne nul mal empire, qy en Trinite parfite  
vit et regne par toutz siecles et par toutz temps. Amen.’

274. *blamed*: The Old French verb *empescher* means both ‘to  
hinder, prevent’, and ‘to accuse, impeach’. But here *empeschez*  
should have been translated by ‘prevented’, not ‘blamed’.

284-306. This passage, which in one form or another appears  
in nearly all the MSS. in English, has no equivalent in the  
MSS. in French so far examined: and, as it conflicts with  
ll. 313 ff., which—apart from the peculiarities of the Cotton  
rendering—indicate that the *Travels* were written after Mandeville’s return, it must be set down as an interpolation.

The art of forging credentials was well understood in the  
Middle Ages, and the purpose of this addition was to silence  
doubters by the *imprimatur* of the highest authority, just as the  
marvel of the Dancers of Colbek is confirmed by the sponsorship  
of Pope Leo IX (1246-9). The different interpretation of the  
latest editor, Hamelius, who thinks it was intended as a sly hit  
at the Papacy (*Quarterly Review* for April 1917, pp. 349 f.)  
seems to rest on the erroneous assumption that the passage  
belonged to the French text as originally written.

The anachronism by which the author is made to seek the  
Pope in Rome gives a clue to the date of the interpolation.  
From the beginning of the fourteenth century until 1377 Avignon,  
and not Rome, was the seat of the Pope; and for another thirty  
years there was doubt as to the issue of the conflict between  
the popes, who had their head-quarters at Rome and were  
recognized by England, and the antipopes, who remained at  
Avignon and had the support of the French. The facts were  
notorious, so that the anachronism would hardly be possible to

one who wrote much before the end of the century, even though he were a partisan of the Roman court.

From internal evidence it would seem that the interpolation first appeared in French. The style is the uniform style of translation, with the same tags—and *see schull vndirstonde* = *et sachiez*; *3if it lyke you* = *si vous plést*; and the same trick of double rendering, e.g. of *dyuerse secte* and of *beleewe*; *wyse* and *discret*; *the auctour ne the persone*. More decisive is an example of the syntactical compromise explained in the note to l. 329: *be the which the Mappa Mundi was made after*. With so many French MSS. of Mandeville in use in England, an interpolation in French would have more authority than one that could not be traced beyond English; and it can hardly be an insuperable objection that no such French text exists to-day, since our knowledge of the Cotton and Egerton versions themselves depends in each case on the chance survival of a single MS.

The point has a bearing on the vexed question of the relations of the English texts one to another. For brevity we may denote by D the defective text of the early prints and most MSS., which is specially distinguished by a long gap near the beginning; by C the Cotton text (ed. Halliwell, Pollard, Hamelius); by E the Egerton text (ed. Warner). Nicholson (in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) and Warner give priority to D, and consider that C and E are independent revisions and expansions of D by writers who had recourse to the French original. Their argument seems to be this: There is precise evidence just before the gap that D derives direct from a mutilated French text (see *Enc. Brit.*), and if it be granted that a single translation from the French is the base of C, D, and E, it follows that C and E are based on D.

A fuller study by Vogels (*Handschriftliche Untersuchungen über die Englische Version Mandeville's*, Crefeld 1891) brings to light a new fact: the two Bodleian MSS., E Museo 116 and Rawlinson D 99, contain an English translation (say L) made from a Latin text of the *Travels*. Vogels also shows that E is based on D, because the characteristic lacuna of D is filled in E by a passage which is borrowed from L and is not homogeneous with the rest of E. So far there is no conflict with the view of Nicholson and Warner. But, after adducing evidence in favour of the contention that C, D, and E are at base one translation, Vogels concludes that D derives from C, arguing thus: There is good evidence that C is a direct translation from the French, and if it be granted that a single translation from the French is the base of C and D, it follows that D derives from C.

In short, the one party maintains that C is an expansion of D, the other that D is an abridgement of C; and this flat opposition

results from the acceptance of common ground: that C and D represent in the main one translation and not two translations.

To return to our interpolation:

(1) Vogels's first piece of evidence that C, D, and E are at base one translation is the appearance in all of this interpolation, which is absent from the MSS. in French. But a passage so remarkable might spread from one to the other of two independent English texts; or if the interpolation originated in England in a MS. of the French text since lost, it might be twice translated.

(2) Vogels assumes that the interpolation first appeared in type C. But C is the form in which it would be least likely to originate, because here the contradiction of statement is sharpest owing to the rendering at ll. 313-14: *and now I am comen hom*, which is peculiar to C (see the French).

(3) If, in order to eliminate individual peculiarities, we take two MSS. of the D type — say Harley 2386 and Royal 17 C. xxxviii—we find that their text of the interpolation is identical with that of E. This is consistent with Vogels's finding that the body of E derives from D; and it confirms the evidence of all the defective MSS. that the interpolation in this particular form was an integral part of the D type.

(4) But between the text of the interpolation in D and that in C there are differences in matter, in sentence order, and in phrasing, which, while they do not exclude the possibility of interdependence, do not suggest such a relation. In D the passage is a naked attempt at authentication; in C it is more artfully though more shamelessly introduced by the touch of piety conventional in epilogues. And as the signs of a French original that appear in C are absent from D, it is unlikely that the text of the interpolation in C derives from D.

(5) Again, in D and E the addition follows the matter of ll. 307-20. Unfortunately, though the balance of probability is in favour of the order in C, the order intended by the interpolator is not certain enough to be made the basis of arguments. But such a difference in position is naturally explained from the stage when the interpolation stood in the margin of a MS., or on an inserted slip, so that it might be taken into the consecutive text at different points. And an examination of the possibilities will show that if the interpolation originated in French, the different placing is more simply explained on the assumption that C and D are independent translations than on the assumption that one of them derives from the other.

To sum up: the central problem for the history of the English texts is the relation of C and D. Taken by itself the evidence afforded by the text of the interpolation is against the derivation of C from D; it neither favours nor excludes the derivation of D from C; it rather favours independent translation in C and D.

For the relations of the rest of the text these deductions afford no more than a clue. Against independent translation of C and D stands the evidence adduced by Vogels for basic unity. Much of this could be accounted for by the coincidences that are inevitable in literal prose translations from a language so near to English in vocabulary and word order; and a few striking agreements might be due to the use of French MSS. having abnormal variants in common, or even to reference by a second translator to the first. The remainder must be weighed against a considerable body of evidence in the contrary sense, e.g. several places where the manuscripts of the French text have divergent readings, of which C translates one, and D another.

It is unlikely that any simple formula will be found to cover the whole web of relationships: but any way of reconciling the conclusions of the authorities should be explored; and the first step is an impartial sifting of all the evidence, with the object of discovering to what extent C and D are interdependent, and to what extent independent translations. The chief obstacle is the difficulty of bringing the necessary texts together; for an investigator who wished to clear the ground would have to face the labour of preparing a six-text *Mandeville*, in the order, French, C, D, E, L, Latin.

301. *Mappa Mundi*: OFr. and ME. *Mappemonde*, was the generic name for a chart of the world, and, by extension, for a descriptive geography of the world. It is not clear what particular *Mappa Mundi* is referred to here, or whether such a map was attached to the manuscript copy of the *Travels* in which this interpolation first appeared.

329. *fro whom all godenesse and grace cometh fro*: cp. 24-5 *the lond of the whiche on of the pre Kynges . . . was kyng offe*; 76-8 *hei . . . of whom all science . . . cometh from*; and 301-2 *be the whiche the Mappa Mundi was made after*. The pleonasm is explained by the divergence of French and ME. word order. In French, as in modern literary English, the preposition is placed at the beginning of the clause, before the relative (*de qui, dont, &c.*). ME. writers naturally use the relative *that*, and postpone the preposition to the end of the clause: e.g. *bat all godenesse cometh fro*. The translator compromises between his French original and his native habit by placing the preposition both at the beginning and at the end.

## X

**Dialect:** Northern (Scots): the MS. copy was made in 1487 more than a century after the poem was composed.

**Vocabulary:** Note *till 'to'* 4, 77 (in rime); *syne 'afterwards'* 35, 112; the forms *sic 'such'* 135, *begouth* 94, and the

short verbal forms *ma* (in rime) 'make' 14, *tane* (in rime) 'taken' 19.

**Inflexions:**

**VERB:** pres. ind. 3 sg. *has* 76.

3 pl. *has* 52, *mais* 72; but *thai haf* 16.

pres. p. *rynand* 17, *vyndland* 129 (in rime).

strong pp. *gane* 84, *drawyn* 124.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** sg. fem. nom. *scho* (in rime) 80; pl. *thai* 1; *thair* 28; *thame* 3.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* remains: *brynstane* (in rime) 20, *sare* 51.

OE. *ō* (close *ō*) appears as *u* (ū?) : *gude* 36, *fut* 57, *tume* 143.

Unaccented -(e)*ā* of weak pa. t. and pp. becomes -(i)*t*: *passit* 2, &c.

**Spelling:** *i* (*y*) following a vowel indicates length: *weill* 10, *noyne* 'noon' 67.

OE. *hw-* appears as *quh-* (indicating strong aspiration): *quhelis* 'wheels' 17, *quhar* 18.

*v* and *w* are interchanged: *vithall* 9, *behevin* 163, *in swndir* 106.

Book XVII of *The Bruce* begins with the capture of Berwick by the Scots in March 1318. Walter Stewart undertakes to hold the city, and is aided in preparing defences by a Flemish engineer, John Crab. Next year King Edward II determines to recapture the stronghold by an attack from both land and sea. He entrenches his forces and makes the first assault unsuccessfully early in September 1319. In this battle the Scotch garrison capture a clever engineer (see note to l. 71 below). King Robert Bruce meanwhile orders a raid into England as a diversion, and on 20 September 1319, an English army, led by the Archbishop of York, is disastrously defeated by the invaders at Mitton. Our extract gives the story of the second assault on Berwick, which was also fruitless. The fortress fell into English hands again as a result of the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333: see XIV a 35-6.

5-6. 'They made a sow of great joists, which had a stout covering over it.' The *sow* was essentially a roof on wheels. The occupants, under shelter of the roof, pushed up to the walls of the besieged place and tried to undermine them. For an illustration see Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, Pt. vi, chap. vi, where other military engines of the time are described.

15. *Crabbis consale*: John Crab was the engineer of the garrison. He is no doubt the same as the John Crab who in 1332 brought Flemish ships round from Berwick to attack the English vessels at Dundee. There was an important Flemish colony at Berwick from early times.

36. *Schir Valter, the gude Steward*: Walter Steward, whose surname denotes his office as Steward of Scotland, was the father of Robert II, the first king of the Stuart line.

42. *Rude-evyn*: September 13, the eve of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

49. *thame . . . of the toune*, 'the defenders of the town'.

51. *or than*, 'or else'.

71 ff. *The engynour*: an English engineer captured by the garrison in the previous assault and forced into their service.

80. *scho*, 'she', some engine of war not previously referred to: apparently a mechanical sling.

123 ff. The boats were filled with men and hoisted up the masts, so as to overtop the walls and allow the besiegers to shoot at the garrison from above. The same engine that proved fatal to the sow was used to break up the boats.

146. *thar wardane with him had*, 'their warden (who) had with him'; cp. note to XIII a 36.

158-61. A confused construction. The writer has in mind: (1) 'Of all the men he had there remained with him only one whom he had not left to relieve', &c.; and (2) 'There were no members of his company (except one) whom he had not left', &c.

## XI

**Dialect:** South Midland.

**Inflections:** *u* for inflectional *e*, as in *knowun a 2, seun a 51, ajenus a 29, mannus b 114* is found chiefly in West Midland.

**VERB:** pres. ind. 2 sg. *madist b 214.*

3 sg. *groundip "a 4.*

3 pl. *seyrn a 1, techen b 5.*

pres. p. *brennynge b 67.*

strong pp. *knowun a 2, 3ouen b 264, take b 271.*

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. *hey, hei, a 3, b 9*; possessive usually *her* in *a 1, 23, &c.*; but *her a 52*, and regularly *here* in *b 25, 36, &c.*; objective *hem a 4, b 3.*

**Sounds:** OE. *a* appears regularly as *o, oo*: *more a 7, Hooly a 10, toolde a 65.*

OE. *y* appears as *y, i*: *synne a 61, stiren b 93.*

The form *poup* (= *pou*) *b 190* probably indicates sound-substitution; and in *ynowb3* (= *ynou3*) *b 149* there is wavering between the two forms.

*a 12. Wit Sunday*: the first element is OE. *hwit* 'white', not 'wit'.

*a 25 ff.* Translations of the Bible were common in France at

this time. No less than six fine copies survive from the library of John, Duke of Berry (d. 1416). About the middle of the fourteenth century King John of France ordered a new translation and commentary to be made at the expense of the Jews, but it was never finished, although several scholars were still engaged on it at the end of the century. The early French verse renderings, which incorporate a good deal of mediaeval legend, are described by J. Bonnard, *Les Traductions de la Bible en Vers Français au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1884); the prose by S. Berger, *La Bible Française au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1884). Of the surviving manuscripts mentioned in these excellent monographs several were written in England.

a 28 ff. In earlier times, when most of those who could read at all were schooled in Latin, the need for English translations of the Scriptures was not so pressing, and the partial translations that were made were intended rather for the use of the clergy and their noble patrons than for the people. Bede (d. 735) completed a rendering of St. John's Gospel on his death-bed. Old English versions of the Gospels and the Psalms still survive. Abbot Aelfric (about A.D. 1000) translated the first five books of the Old Testament; and more than one Middle English version of the Psalms is known. Wyclif was perhaps unaware of the Old English precedents because French renderings became fashionable in England from the twelfth century onwards, and he would probably think of the Psalter more as a separate service book than as an integral part of the Bible. But the prologue to the Wyclite version attributed to John Purvey quotes the example of Bede and King Alfred; and the Dialogue on Translation which, in Caxton's print, serves as preface to Trevisa's translation of Higden, emphasizes the Old English precedents. Both may be read in *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, ed. A. W. Pollard, London 1903, pp. 193 ff. The attitude of the mediaeval Church towards vernacular translations of the Bible has been studied very fully by Miss M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and other Medieval Biblical Versions*, Cambridge 1920.

a 34. *be pley of 3ork*. The York Paternoster Play has not survived, but there are records from 1389 of a Guild of the Lord's Prayer at York, whose main object was the production of the play. It seems to have been an early example of the moral play, holding up 'the vices to scorn and the virtues to praise', and it probably consisted of several scenes, each exhibiting one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The last recorded representation was in 1572. See Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, p. 154. The association of the friars with the production of religious plays is confirmed by other writings of the time. They were quick to realize the value of dramatic

representation as a means of gaining favour with the people, and their encouragement must be reckoned an important factor in the development of the Miracle Play.

*a* 51. *wher*, 'whether'; cp. *b* 207. In ll. 197, 266, 274, it introduces a direct question; see note to *v* 118.

*b* 20. *Gregory*, Gregory the Great. See his work *In Primum Regum Expositiones*, Bk. iii, c. 28: *praedicatores autem Sanctae Ecclesiae . . . prophetae ministerio utuntur* (Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. lxxix, col. 158).

*b* 44. *(God)*. Such omissions from the Corpus MS. are supplied throughout from the copy in Trinity College, Dublin, MS. C. III. 12.

*b* 79-80. Cp. Luke xxi. 36 and *1 Thessalonians v. 17*.

*b* 89-91. Proverbs xxviii. 9.

*b* 126. *as Ambrose*: In 386 St. Ambrose, besieged in the Portian Church at Milan by Arian sectaries, kept his followers occupied and in good heart by introducing the Eastern practice of singing hymns and antiphons. See St. Augustine's *Confessions* Bk. ix, c. 7.

*b* 131-2. *placebo*. Vespers of the Dead, named from the first word of the antiphon, *Placebo Domino in regione vivorum* (Psalm cxiv. 9).

*dirige*. Matins of the Dead, named from the first word of the antiphon, *Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam* (Psalm v. 9). Hence our word *dirige*.

*comendacion*: an office in which the souls of the dead are commended to God.

*matynes of Oure Lady*: one of the services in honour of the Virgin introduced in the Middle Ages.

The whole question of these accretions to the Church services is dealt with by our English master in liturgical study, the late Mr. Edmund Bishop, in his essay introductory to the Early English Text Society's edition of the *Prymer*, since reprinted with additional notes in his *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford 1918), pp. 211 ff.

*b* 137f. *deschaunt, countre note, and organ, and smale brekyng*. The elaboration of the Church services in mediaeval times was accompanied by a corresponding enrichment of the music. To the plain chant additional parts were joined, sung in harmony either above or below the plain chant. *Descant* usually means the addition of a part above, *organ* and *countre-note* (= counter-point) the addition of parts either above or below. All these could be composed note for note with the plain chant. But *smale brekyng* represents a further complication, whereby the single note in the plain chant was represented by two or more notes in the accompanying parts.

*b* 140f. The abuse is referred to in *Piers Plowman*:

*Persones and parsheprestes pleyned to the bisshop  
That hure parshens ben poore sitthe the pestelence tyme,  
To haue licence and leue in Londone to dwelle,  
And syng ther for symonye, for seluer ys swete.*

*Prologue ll. 81-4.*

and by Chaucer in his description of the Parson :

*He sette nat his benefice to hyre,  
And leet his sheepe encombred in the myre,  
And ran to Londoun, unto Seint Poules,  
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules.*

*Prologue ll. 507-10.*

**b 183. Ordynalle of Salisbury.** An 'ordinal' is a book showing the order of church services and ceremonies. In mediaeval times there was considerable divergence in the usage of different churches. But after the Conquest, and more especially in the thirteenth century, there was developed at Salisbury Cathedral an elaborate order and form of service which spread to most of the English churches of any pretensions. This was called 'Sarum' or 'Salisbury' use.

**b 209. bei demen it dedly synne a prest to fulfille, &c.** For this construction, cp. Chaucer, *Prologue* 502 *No wonder is a lewed man to ruste*; Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, v. iv. 108 f. *It is the lesser blot ... Women to change their shapes*, &c. The same construction, where we now insert *for*, is seen in *Gawayne* (v. 352-3) *hit were a wynne huge ... a leude, bat coupe, to luf hom wel*, &c.

**b 221-3.** 'They say that a priest may be excused from saying mass, to be the substance of which God gave Himself, provided that he hears one.'

**b 228 f. newe costly portos, antifeners, graielis, and alle opere bokis.** *Portos*, French *porte hors*, represents Latin *portiforium*, a breviary convenient for 'carrying out of doors'. The *antifener* contained the antiphons, responses, &c., necessary for the musical service of the canonical hours. The *graiel*, or *gradual*, was so called from the gradual responses, sung at the steps of the altar, or while the deacon ascended the steps of the pulpit: but the book actually contained all the choral service of the Mass.

**b 230. makyng of biblis.** Wyclif in his *Office of Curates* (ed. Matthew, p. 145) complains of the scarcity of bibles. *But fewe curatis han be Bible and exposicions of be Gospelis, and litel studien on hem, and lesse donne after hem. But wolde God hat euery parische chirche in his lond hadde a good Bible! &c.*

**b 234.** At this time books, especially illuminated books, were very dear. The Missal of Westminster Abbey, which is now shown in the Chapter-house, was written in 1382-4 at a cost of £34 14s. 7d.—a great sum in those days, for the scribe, Thomas Preston, who took two years to write it, received only

£4 for his labour, 20s. for his livery, and board at the rate of 21s. 8d. the half year. The inscription in British Museum MS. Royal 19 D.11, a magnificently illustrated Bible with commentary, shows that it was captured at Poitiers with King John of France, and bought by the Earl of Salisbury for 100 marks (about £66). Edward III gave the same sum to a nun of Amesbury for a rich book of romance. In France John, Duke of Berry, paid as much as £200 for a breviary, and the appraisement of his library in 1416 shows a surprisingly high level of values (L. Delisle, *Le Cabinet des Manuscrits*, vol. iii, pp. 171 ff.). These were luxurious books. The books from the chapel of Archbishop Bowet of York (d. 1423) sold more reasonably: £8 for a great antiphonar and £6 13s. 4d. *pro uno libro vocato 'Bibill'*, were the highest prices paid; and from his library there were some fascinating bargains: 4s. for a small copy of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*; 5s. *pro uno libro vocato 'Johannes Andrewe'*, *vetere et debili*, which would probably turn out to be a dry work on the Decretals; and 3s. 4d. for a nameless codex, *vetere et cadugo*, 'old and falling to pieces'. (*Historians of the Church of York*, ed. J. Raine, vol. iii, pp. 311, 315.)

But the failing activity of the monastic scriptoria, and the formation of libraries by the friars and by rich private collectors, made study difficult for students at the universities, where at this time a shilling per week—a third of the price of Bowet's most dilapidated volume—was reckoned enough to cover the expenses of a scholar living plainly. The college libraries were scantily supplied: books were lent only in exchange for a valuable pledge; or even pawned, in hard times, by the colleges themselves.

These conditions were not greatly improved until printing gave an easy means of duplication, and for a time caused the humble manuscripts in which most of the mediaeval vernacular literature was preserved to be treated as waste paper. As late as the eighteenth century Martène found the superb illuminated manuscripts left by John, Duke of Berry, to the Sainte Chapelle at Bourges serving as roosting places to their keeper's hens (*Voyage Littéraire*, Paris 1717, pt. i, p. 29).

*b* 261-3. The reference is to Acts vi. 2, 'It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.'

*b* 266. *wisere þan*. After these words the Corpus MS. (p. 170, col. i, l. 34 mid.), without any warning, goes on to the closing passage of an entirely unrelated 'Petition to the King and Parliament'. By way of compensation, the end of our sermon appears at the close of the Petition. Clearly the scribe (or some one of his predecessors) copied without any regard for the sense from a MS. of which the leaves had become disarranged.

*b* 285. Cp. Acts iii. 6.

## XII

Dialect: London (SE. Midland) with Kentish features.

Inflections:

- VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *loveth a* 5; contracted *stant a* 74.  
3 pl. *schewen a* 136, *halsen a* 148, *be* (in rime) *a* 92.  
pres. p. *growende a* 80.  
strong pp. *schape* (in rime) *a* 130, beside *scha<sup>t</sup>en* *a* 169.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. nom. *sche a* 32; pl. *thei a* 148;  
*here a* 144; *hem a* 112.

Unaccented final -e is treated as in Chaucer, having its full value in the verse when it represents an inflection or final vowel in Old English or Old French, e. g.

*And for he scholdē slepē softē a* 93

*An apā which at thilke throwē* \*b 5

Sounds: e appears as in Kentish for O.E. y: *hell* 'hill' *a* 65, 79, 86; *keste* 'kissed' *a* 178; note the rimes *unschette* : *lette* *a* 71-2; *pet* 'pit': *let b* 9-10; and less decisive *pet* : *knet* (O.E. *knytan*) *b* 29-30, 53-4; *dreie* : *beie b* 23-4.

Spelling: ie represents close ē: *flietende a* 157, *hier b* 34; *diemed b* 216.

Syntax: The elaborate machinery of sentence connexion deserves special attention; and many turns of phrase are explained by Gower's fluency in French.

a 1. Gower follows Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xi. Chaucer tells the story of Ceix and Alcyone in his *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, ll. 62 ff. This is presumably the early work to which the Man of Law refers:

- I kan right now no thrifte tale seyn*  
*But Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly*  
*On metres and on rymyng craftily,*  
*Hath seyd hem, in swich Englissk as he kan,*  
*Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man;*  
*And if he have nocht seyd hem, leve brother,*  
*In o book, he hath seyd hem in another;*  
*For he hath toold of loveris up and doun*
- *Mo than Ovide made of mencioune*  
*In his Epistelles, that been ful olde.*  
*What sholdē I tellen hem, syn they ben tolde?*  
*In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione, &c.*  
(Link to *Man of Law's Tale*, ll. 46 ff.)

Gower's rendering is the more poetical.

a 2. *Trocinie*. Ovid's *Trachinia tellus*, so called from the city of Trachis, north-west of Thermopylae.

a 23. *As he which wolde go*: otiose, or at best meaning no more than 'desiring to go'. Cp. b 25 *As he which hadde* = 'having' simply; and similarly b 37, 203. It is an imitation of a contemporary French idiom *comme celui qui*.

a 26. *and*: the displacement of the conjunction from its natural position at the beginning of the clause is characteristic of Gower's verse. Cp. l. 152 *Upon the morwe and up sche sterite* = 'and in the morning she got up', and a 45, 49, b 121, 124, 135, 160, 182. See notes to ll. 32, 78 f.

a 32. Editors put a comma after *wepende*, and no stop after *seileth*: but it is Alceoun who weeps. The displacement of *and* is exemplified in the notes to l. 26 and ll. 78 f.

a 37. 'One had not to look for grief'; a regular formula of understatement, meaning 'her grief was great'.

a 53. *Hire reyny cope*, &c.: the rainbow, which was the sign or manifestation of Iris.

a 59 ff. *Prope Cimmerios longo spelunca recessu,  
Mons covus, ignavi domus et perpetria Somni.*  
(*Metamorphoses* xi. 592-3.)

Much of the poetry of Gower's description is due to Ovid.

a 78 f. Editors put no stop after *may* and a comma after *hell*. Hence *The New English Dictionary* quotes this passage as an isolated instance of *noise*, transitive, meaning 'disturb with noise'. But *noise* is intransitive, *hell* is governed by *aboute round*, and the position of *bot* is abnormal as in l. 105. Cp. notes to ll. 26, 32, and render 'But all round about the hill'.

a 105. For the word order see notes to ll. 26, 32, 78 f.

a 117. *The lis*, 'the man', cp. IV a 43.

a 118. *Ithecus*: for Icelos. According to Ovid 'Icelos' was the name by which he was known to the gods, but men called him 'Phobetor'.

a 123. *Panthasas*: Ovid's *Phantasos*.

a 152. See note to l. 26.

a 197. The halcyon, usually identified with the kingfisher, was supposed to build a floating nest on the sea in midwinter, and to have power to calm the winds and waves at that season, bringing 'halcyon weather'.

b 2. *I finde*. Matthew Paris in his *Chronica Maiora* (ed. Luard, Rolls Series, vol. ii, pp. 413 ff.) gives a similar story, which, he says, King Richard the First often told to rebuke ingratitude. In this version, Vitalis of Venice falls into a pit dug as a trap for wild beasts. The rescued animals are a lion and a serpent; the rescuer is nameless, and the gem given to him by the serpent has not the magic virtue of returning whenever sold. Nearer to Gower is the story told in Nigel Wireker's *Speculum Stultorum*, a late twelfth-century satire in Latin verse, which, from the name of its principal character Burnellus the

Ass, who is ambitious to have a longer tail, is sometimes called *Burnellus*; cp. Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, l. 492:

*I have wel rad in Daun Burnel the Asse  
Among his vers, &c.*

The poem is printed in T. Wright's *Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century* (Rolls Series, 1872), vol. i. At the end the Ass returns disappointed to his master Bernardus (= Bardus). Bernardus, when gathering wood, hears Dryanus (= Adrian), a rich citizen of Cremona, call from a pit for help. The rescued animals are a lion, a serpent, and an ape. The gem given by the serpent in token of gratitude always returns to Bernardus, who, with more honesty than Gower's poor man shows, takes it back to the buyer. The fame of the marvellous stone reaches the king; his inquiries bring to light the whole story; and Dryanus is ordered to give half his goods to Bernardus.

Gower probably worked on a later modification of Nigel's story.

b 86. *blessed, 'crossed (himself)'*.

b 89. *Between him and his asse*, i.e. pulling together with the ass. The ass is, of course, the distinguished *Burnellus*.

b 116. *his ape*: for this *ape* (?).

b 191. *Justinian*, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (d. 565), was best known for his codification of the Roman Law, and so is named here as the type of a lawgiver.

### XIII

**Dialect:** South-Western, with some Midland forms.

**Inflections:**

**VERB:** pres. ind. 3 sg. *blowēþ* a 7, *castēþ* a 8.

3 pl. *buþ* a 10, *habbēþ* a 15.

pres. p. *slyttyng, frotyn* b 59.

strong pp. *yknowe* a 12, *ysoðe* a 30.

**NOUN:** Note the plural in *-(e)n*, *tren* 'trees' a 44, 51, 53; *chylđern* b 16 is a double plural.

**PRONOUN 3 PERS.:** pl. *hy* a 17; *here* a 61; *ham* a 23.

Note the unstressed 3sg. and 3 pl. form *a*, e.g. at a 13, 27.

**Sounds:** There is no instance of *v* for initial *f*, which is evidenced in the spelling of early South-Western writers like Robert of Gloucester (about 1300), or of *z* for initial *s*, which is less commonly shown in spelling. *u* for OE. *y* occurs in *hulles* 'hills' a 18 (beside *bysynes* b 24, where Modern English has *u* in spelling but *i* in pronunciation; and *lift* (OE. *lyft*) b 39, where Modern English has the South-Eastern form *left*).

a 2-3. *Mayster ... Minerua ... hys*: Trevisa appears to have understood 'Minerva' as the name of a god.

a 6-49. Higden took all this passage from Book i of the twelfth-century Annals of Alfred of Beverley (ed. Hearne, pp. 6-7). The *Polychronicon* is a patchwork of quotations from earlier writers.

a 7. *Pectoun*. Higden has *ad Peccum*, and Alfred of Beverley *in monte qui vocatur Pec*, i.e. The Peak of Derbyshire. *cc* and *ct* are not distinguishable in some hands of the time, and Trevisa has made *Peccum* into *Pectoun*.

a 14. *Cherdhol*. Hearne's text of Alfred of Beverley has *Cherole*; Henry of Huntingdon (about 1150), who gives the same four marvels in his *Historia Anglorum*, has *Chederhole*; and on this evidence the place has been identified with Cheddar in Somerset, where there are famous caves.

a 22. *an egle hys nest*: cp. b 23 *a child hys brouch*. This construction has two origins: (1) It is a periphrasis for the genitive, especially in the case of masculine and neuter proper names which had no regular genitive in English; (2) It is an error arising from false manuscript division of the genitive suffix *-es*, *-is*, from its stem.

a 36. ⟨bai⟩ here and in l. 52 is inserted on the evidence of the other MSS. Syntactically its omission is defensible, for the suppressed relative is a common source of difficulty in Middle English; see the notes to v 4-6, 278-9; x 146; XIV c 54; xvii 66.

a 50. *Wynburney*. Wimborne in Dorset. Hére St. Cuthburga founded a nunnery, which is mentioned in one of Aldhelm's letters as early as A.D. 705. The information that it is 'not far from Bath', which is hardly accurate, was added by Higden to the account of the marvel he found in the *Topographia Hibernica* of Giraldus Cambrensis (vol. v, p. 86 of the Rolls Series edition of his works).

a 54-64. Higden took this passage from Giraldus, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, Bk. ii, c. 11 (vol. vi, p. 139 of the Rolls edition).

a 60-1. *be at here aboue*, 'be over them', 'have the upper hand'.

a 63. *Pimbilmere*: the English name for Lake Bala.

b 6-7. *pe Flemmynges*. The first settlement of Flemings in Pembrokeshire took place early in the twelfth century, and, in 1154, Henry II, embarrassed alike by the turbulence of the Welsh, and of the new host of Flemish mercenaries who had come in under Stephen, encouraged a further settlement. They formed a colony still distinguishable from the surrounding Welsh population.

b 11-12. The threefold division of the English according to their Continental origin dates back to Bede's *Ecclesiastical*

*History.* But the areas settled by Bede's three tribes do not correspond to Southern, Northern, and Midland. The Jutes occupied Kent, whence the South-Eastern dialect; the Saxons occupied the rest of the South, whence the South-Western dialect; and the Angles settled in the Midlands and the North; so that the Midland and Northern dialects are both Anglian, and derive from the same Continental tribe or tribal group.

*b 26. he furste moreyn:* the Black Death of 1349. There were fresh outbreaks of plague in 1362, 1369, 1376.

*b 26-42.* The bracketed passage is an addition by Trevisa himself, and is of primary importance for the history of English and of English education. See the valuable article by W. H. Stevenson in *An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall*, pp. 421 ff.

*b 27-8. Iohan Cornwal, a mayster of gramere.* A 'master of grammar' was a licensed teacher of grammar. Mr. Stevenson points out that in 1347-8 John of Cornwall received payment from Merton College, Oxford, for teaching the boys of the founder's kin. His countryman Trevisa probably had personal knowledge of his methods of teaching.

*b 39-40. and a scholle passe he se,* 'if they should cross the sea'.

*b 47-8.* The bracketed words are introduced by Trevisa.

*b 50 f. and ys gret wondur:* *and* is superfluous and should perhaps be deleted.

*b 58-65.* Though still often quoted as a fourteenth-century witness to the pronunciation of Northern English (e.g. by K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, 1914, pp. 40 f.), this passage, as Higden acknowledges, comes from the Prologue to Book iii. of William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum*, completed in the year 1125: see the Rolls Series edition, p. 209.

## XIV

*a 2. Bannockburn.* Minot's subject is not so much the defeat of the English at Bannockburn in 1314, as the English victory at Halidon Hill on 19 July 1333, which he regards as a vengeance for Bannockburn.

*a 7. Saint Iohnes toune:* Perth, so called from its church of St. John the Baptist. It was occupied by the English in 1332 after the defeat of the Scots at Dupplin Moor.

*a 13. Striflin,* 'Stirling'.

*a 15.* Hall suggests that this refers to Scotch raids on the North of England undertaken to distract Edward III from the siege of Berwick.

*a* 19 f. *Rughfute riueling* . . . *Berebag*: nicknames for the Scots, the first because they wore brogues (*riuelings*) of rough hide; the second because, to allow of greater mobility, each man carried his own bag of provisions instead of relying on a baggage train.

*a* 22. *Brig* = *Burghes* l. 25, 'Bruges'. At this time Scots, English, and French had all close connexions with the Netherlands. Observe that John Crab, who aided the Scots in the defence of Berwick (note to *x* 15), was a Fleming.

*a* 35. *at Berwick*. Berwick fell as a result of the battle of Halidon Hill which the Scots fought with the object of raising the siege. For an earlier siege of Berwick, in 1319, see No. x.

*a* 36. *get*, 'watch', 'be on the look out' (ON. *gáta*).

*b* 5-6. Calais was at this time a convenient base for piracy in the Channel.

*b* 19. *A bare*: Edward III, whom Minot often refers to as 'the boar'.

*b* 24-6. In preparation for the long siege Edward III had built a regular camp beside Calais.

*b* 32. *Sir Philip*. Philip de Valois, Philip VI of France (1293-1350). His son, John Duke of Normandy (1319-64), who succeeded him in 1350, is of good memory as a lover of fine books. Two are mentioned in the notes to *x* 1 a 25 ff. and *x* 1 b 234. A splendid copy of the *Miracles de Notre Dame*, preserved until recently in the Seminary Library at Soissons, seems also to have been captured with his baggage at Poitiers, for it was bought back from the English by King Charles V. Another famous book produced by his command was the translation of Livy by Bersuire, with magnificent illuminations. The spirit of the collector was not damped by his captivity in England from 1356-60, for his account books show that he continued to employ binders and miniaturists, to encourage original composition, and to buy books, especially books of romance. See *Notes et Documents relatifs à Jean, Roi de France, &c.*, ed. by Henry of Orleans, Duc d'Aumale (Philobiblon Soc., London 1855-6).

*b* 40. *je Cardinales*. Pope Clement VI had sent cardinals Annibale Ceccano bishop of Frascati, and Etienne Aubert, who became Pope Innocent VI in 1352, to arrange a peace between France and England. But the English were suspicious of the Papal court at Avignon, and accused the cardinals of favouring the French cause.

*b* 82. *Sir John de Vienne*. Jean de Vienne, seigneur de Pagny (d. 1351), a famous captain in the French wars.

*c* 5 f. 'They (friends) are so slippery when put to the test, so eager to have (for themselves), and so unwilling to give up (to others).'

c 14. *And, 'if'.*

c 47. King John of France was captured at Poitiers in 1356 and held in England as a prisoner until the Treaty of Bretigny in 1360. See note to XIV b 32.

c 54. Note the omission of the relative: 'which recked not a cleat for all France', and cp. ll. 43-4, XIII a 36 (note).

c 59. *his helm*, 'its helm'—the bar by which the rudder was moved.

c 61. 'The King sailed and rowed aright'; on *him*, see note to XV g 24.

c 83. *An ympe*: Richard II.

c 90. *sarri*: not in the dictionaries in this sense, is probably OFr. *serre*, *sarre*, in the developed meaning 'active', 'vigorous', seen in the adv. *sarrement*.

c 103-4. 'If we are disloyal and inactive, so that what is rarely seen is straightway forgotten.'

c 108. 'Who was the fountain of all courage.'

c 111. *los*, 'fam<sup>2</sup>'.

d 1. SCHEP: here means 'shepherd', 'pastor', a name taken by Ball as appropriate to a priest.

*Seynte Marie prest of ȝork*, 'priest of St. Mary's of York' (cp. note to I 44), a great Benedictine abbey founded soon after the Conquest; see Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. iii, pp. 529 ff. *Marie* does not take the *s* inflexion, because it has already the Latin genitive form, cp. *Mary-ȝet* X 163.

d 2. *Johan Nameles*, 'John Nobody', for *nameless* has the sense 'obscure', 'lowly'.

d 6. *Hobbe he Robbere*. *Hob* is a familiar form for *Robert*, and it has been suggested that *Hobbe he Robbere* may refer to Robert Hales, the Treasurer of England, who was executed by the rebels in 1381. But *Robert* was a conventional name for a robber, presumably owing to the similarity of sound. Already in the twelfth century, Mainerus, the Canterbury scribe of the magnificent Bible now in the library of Sainte-Geneviève at Paris, plays upon it in an etymological account of his family: *Secundus (sc. frater meus) dicebatur Robertus, quia a re nomen habuit: spoliator enim diu fuit et praedo*. From the fourteenth century lawless men were called *Robert's men*. In *Piers Plowman* Passus v (A- and B-texts) there is a confession of 'Robert the Robber'; and the literary fame of the prince of highwaymen, 'Robin Hood', belongs to this period.

d 14. *do wel and bettre*: note this further evidence of the popularity of *Piers Plowman*, with its visions of *Dowel*, *Dobet*, and *Dobest*.

## XV

a 8. *Ye clot him clingge!* 'May the clay cling to him!' i. e. 'Would he were dead!'

a 12. *Yider*: MS. *Yider*, and conversely MS. *Yiif* 23 for *Yiif* 'if'. *y* and *þ* are endlessly confused by scribes.

b 1. *Lenten ys come . . . to toune*. In the Old English *Metrical Calendar* phrases like *cymed . . . us to tune Martius reðe*, 'fierc March comes to town', are regular. The meaning is 'to the dwellings of men', 'to the world'.

b 3. *þat*: construe with *Lenten*.

b 7. *him þreteþ*, 'chides', 'wrangles' (ON. *þræta*?). See the thirteenth-century debate of *The Thrush and the Nightingale* (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. i, pp. 241 ff.), of which the opening lines are closely related to this poem.

b 11. *Ant wlyteþ on huere wynter wele*, 'and look at their winter happiness (?). This conflicts with *huere wynter wo* above; and the explanation that the birds have forgotten the hardships of the past winter and recall only its pleasures is forced. Holthausen's emendation *wynne wile* 'wealth of joys' (cp. l. 35) is good.

b 20. *Miles*: a crux. It has been suggested without much probability that *miles* means 'animals' from Welsh *mil*.

b 28. *Dearwes donkeþ be dounes*. Of the suggestions made to improve the halting metre the best is *þise* for *þe*. The poet is thinking of the sparkle of dew in the morning sun; cp. *Sir Gawayne* 519 f.:

*When he donkande dewe dropes of he leuez  
To bide a blyſful blusch of he bryȝt sunne.*

b 29-30. 'Animals with their cries (*rounes*) unmeaning to us (*derne*), whereby they converse (*domes* for *te deme*). For the weakened sense of *deme* (*domes*) see note to V 115.

c 30. *Wery so water in wote*: the restless lover (l. 21) has tossed all night like the troubled waters in a *wore*; cp. *I wake so water in wore* in another lyric of the same MS. It has been suggested that *wore* = Old High German *wuor* 'weir'; but the rimes in both passages show that the stem is OE. *wär*, not *wör*.

d 2. *the holy londe*: because Ireland was *par excellence* 'the Land of the Saints'.

f. I am obliged to Professor Carleton Brown for the information that this poem is found, with three additional stanzas, in MS. 18. 7. 21 of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. The complete text is now available in his *Religious Poems of the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford 1924.

f 4. *berē* (OE. *býre*) riming with *fere* (OE. (*ge*)*fēra*) indicates a South-Eastern composition.

g 1. *Scere Porsday*: Maundy Thursday, the Eve of Good Friday.

g1-2. *aros* : *Judas* : the alternative form *aras* may have given the rime in the original, but it is not justifiable to accept this as certain and so to assume an early date of composition for the poem. Morsbach, *ME. Grammatik*, § 135, n. 4, quotes a number of parallel rimes with proper names, and the best explanation is that *o* in *aros* still represented a sound intermediate between *ä* and *ö*, and so served as an approximate rime to *ä* in proper names.

g6. *cunesmen* : as *c* and *t* are hard to distinguish in some ME. hands, and are often confused by copyists, this reading is more likely than *tunesmen* of the editors—Wright-Hallowell, Mätzner, Child, Cook (and *N. E. D.* s.v. *townsman*). For (1) *tunesman* is a technical, not a poetical word. (2) In a poem remarkable for its terseness, *tunesmen* reduces a whole line to inanity, unless the poet thinks of Judas quite precisely as a citizen of a town other than Jerusalem; and in the absence of any Biblical tradition it is unlikely that a writer who calls Pilate *he riche Ieu* would gratuitously assume that Judas was not a citizen of Jerusalem, where his sister lived. (3) Christ's words are throughout vaguely prophetic, and as Judas forthwith *imette wid is soster*—one of his kin—*cunesmen* gives a pregnant sense. [I find the MS. actually has *cunesmen*, but leave the note, lest *tunesmen* might appear to be better established.]

g8. The repetition of ll. 8, 25, 30 is indicated in the MS. by 'ii' at the end of each of these lines, which is the regular sign for *bis*.

g16. 'He tore his hair until it was bathed in blood.' The MS. has *top*, not *cop*.

g24. *In him com ur Lord gon*. In the MS. *ist* = *Crist* has been erased after *Lord*. Note (1) the reflexive use of *him*, which is very common in OE. and ME. with verbs of motion, e.g. *Up him stod* 27, 29; *Pau Pilatus him com* 30; *Als I me rode* xv a 4; *The Kyng him rod* XIV c 61; cp. the extended use *ar be coc him crowe* 33, and notes to II 289, v 86: (2) the use of the infinitive (*gon*) following, and usually defining the sense of, a verb of motion, where Modern English always, and ME. commonly (e.g. *zede karoland* I 117; *com daunceing* II 298), uses the pres. p.: 'Our Lord came walking in'.

g27. *am I bat?* 'Is it I?', the interrogative form of *ich hit am* or *ich am hit*. The editors who have proposed to complete the line by adding *wrech*, have missed the sense. The original rime was *het*: spec. cp. note to I 240.

g30. *cnistes*: for *cniste* = *cnihte* representing the OE. gen. pl. *cnihta*. On the forms *meist* 6, *heiste* 18, *eiste* 20, *bitaiste* 21, *iboust* 26, *miste* 29, *cnistes* 30, *fiste* 31, all with *st* for OE. *ht*, see Appendix § 6 end.

h17-18. Difficult. Perhaps 'The master smith lengthens

a little piece [sc. of hot iron], and hammers a smaller piece, twines the two together, and strikes [with his hammer] a treble note'.

*h 21-2. clophemerys . . . brenwaterys*: not in the dictionaries, but both apparently nonce names for the smiths: they 'clothe horses' (for by the end of the fourteenth century a charger carried a good deal of armour and harness), and 'burn water' (when they temper the red-hot metal).

*i 4. Dat*: dat. rel. 'to whom'; cp. vi 64. But *lowte* is sometimes transitive 'to reverence'.

*i 6.* This line, at first sight irrelevant, supplies both rime and doctrine. See in Chaucer's Preface to his *Tale of Melibeu*s the passage ending:

*I meene of Marke, Mathew, Luc and John—  
Bot doutelees hir sentence is all oon.*

An erased *t* after *Awangelys* in the MS. shows that the scribe wavered between *Awangelys* 'Gospels' and *Awangelystes*.

*i 7. Sent Geretrude*: Abbess of Nivelle (d. 659), commemorated on March 17. She is appropriately invoked, for one or more rats make her emblem.

*i 11. Sent Kasi*. Professor Bruce Dickins kindly informs me that St. Nicasius (Dec. 12) was celebrated in Northern France as an enemy of rats. I cannot trace his acts against them, but parallels are not wanting. St. Ivor, an Irish saint, banished rats from his neighbourhood *per imprecationem* because they gnawed his books; and the charm-harassed life of an Irish rat was still proverbial in Shakespeare's day: 'I was never so berhymed' says Rosalind (*As You Like It*, III. ii) 'since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat'. In the South of France the citizens of Autun trusted more to the processes of the law, and brought a suit against the rats which ended in a victory for the defendants because the plaintiffs were unable to guarantee them safe conduct to the court (see Chambers, *Book of Days*, under Jan. 17). Even in such little things the Normans showed their practical genius:—A friend chancing to meet St. Lanfranc by the way inquired the cause of the strange noises that came from a bag he was carrying: 'We are terribly plagued with mice and rats', explained the good man, 'and so, to put down their ravages, I am bringing along a cat' (*Mures et rati valde nobis sunt infestii, et idcirco nunc affero catum ad comprimentum furorem illorum*). *Acta Sanctorum* for May 28, p. 824.

## XVI

Dialect: Yorkshire.

Inflections:

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *bou roysis* 99, *bou is* 360; beside *bou hast* 69.3 sg. *bidis* 23, *comes* 57.1 pl. *we here* 169.2 pl. *je haue* 124.3 pl. *hei make* 103, *hei crie* 107, *dwelle* (rime) 102; beside *musteres* 104, *sais* 108.imper. pl. *harkens* 37, *beholdes* 195; but *vndo* 182.pres. p. *walkand* 53 (in rime); beside *shynyng* 94.strong pp. *stoken* 193, *brokynne* 195, &c.Contracted verbal forms are *mase* pres. 3 pl. (in rime) 116, *bus* pres. 2 sg. 338, *tane* pp. 172.PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. nom. *hei* 21; poss. *thare* 18, *her* 20; obj. *hanne* 9; but *hemselue* 307.\* The demonstrative *her* 'these', 97, 399, is Northern.Sounds: *a* remains in rimes: *are* : *care* 345-7, *waa* : *gloria* 406-8, *lawe* : *knawe* 313-15, *moste* (for *mäste*) : *taste* 358-60; but *ə* is also proved for the original in *restore* : *euermore* : *were* (for *wēre*) : *before* 13 ff.Spelling: In *fois* (= *fēs*) 30, the spelling with *i* indicates vowel length.17. *were*: rime requires the alternative form *wēre*.39. *Foure thowsande and sex hundereth* 3ere. I do not know on what calculation the writer changes 5,500, which is the figure in the Greek and Latin texts of the Gospel of Nicodemus, in the French verse renderings, and the ME. poem *Harrowing of Hell*. Cp. I. 354.40. *in his stedde*: the rimes *hadde* : *gladde* : *sadde* point to the Towneley MS. reading *in darknes sted*, 'set in darkness', as nearer the original, which possibly had *in bister(nes) sted*.49. *we*: read *je* (?). For what follows cp. Isaiah ix. 1-2.59. *puplissid*: the rime with *Criste* shows that the pronunciation was *puplist*. Similarly, *abasshed* : *traste* 177-9. In French these words have *-ss-*, which normally becomes *-sh-* in English. It is hard to say whether *-ss-* remained throughout in Northern dialects, or whether the development was OFr. *-ss- > M.E. -sh- > Northern -ss-* (notes to I 128, VII 4).62. *bis*: read *Hēs* (?). *frendis*: here 'relatives', 'parents' (ON. *frændi*); see Luke ii. 27.

65-8. Luke ii. 29-32.

73-82. Matthew iii. 13-17, &amp;c.

75. *hande*: the rime requires the Norse plural *hend* as at I. 400; cp. XVII 255, IV a 65 (foot-note).

86 ff. Cp. Matthew xvii. 3 ff., Mark ix. 2 ff.

113. *Astrotte*: cp. 2 Kings xxiii. 13 'Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians'. I cannot identify *Anaball* among the false gods.

115. *Bele-Berit*: Judges viii. 33 'the children of Israel ... made Baal-Berith their god'. For *Belial* see 2 Cor. vi. 15.

122-4. A common misrendering for 'Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors', Psalm xxiv. 7.

125 ff. postulate a preceding *et introibit rex glorię*, which the writer has not been able to work into the frame of his verse.

128. *a kyng of vertues clere = dominus virtutum*, rendered 'Lord of Hosts' in Psalm xxiv. 10.

154-6. *ware: ferre*: the rime indicates some corruption. *ware* probably stands for *werre* 'worse'. The Towneley MS. has *or it be war*.

162. John xi.

165. John xiii. 27.

171 ff. 'And know he won away Lazarus, who was given to us to take charge of, do you think that you can hinder him from showing the powers that he has purposed (to show)?' But it is doubtful whether *what* is a true relative. Rather 'from showing his powers—those he has purposed (to show)'.

188. *I prophiced*: MS. of *prophicie* breaks the rime scheme.

190. Psalm cvii. 16 'For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.'

205 ff. The rimes *saide: braide: ferde: grathed* are bad. For the last two read *flaide* = 'terrified', and *gräid*, a shortened form of *graithed*.

208. *and we wer moo*, 'if we were more', 'even if there were more of us'.

220. *as my prisounē* might be taken closely with *here*: 'in this place as my prison'. The Towneley MS. has *in* for *as*. Better would be *prisounē(s)* 'prisoners'.

240. *wolle*: read *wille* for the rime.

241. *God(ys) sonne*: MS. *God sonne* might be defended as parallel to the instances in the note to XVII 88.

256. Apparently, 'you argue his men in the mire', i.e. if Jesus is God's Son, the souls should remain in hell because God put them there. But the text may be corrupt.

267 ff. Cp. Ezekiel xxxi. 16, &c.

281 ff. *Salamon saide*: Proverbs ii. 18-19 taken with vii. 27 and ix. 18. It was hotly disputed in the Middle Ages whether Solomon himself was still in hell. Dante, *Paradiso*, x. 110, informs a world eager for tidings that he is in Paradise: but Langland declares *Ich leyue he be in helie* (C-text, iv. 330); and, more sweepingly, coupling him with Aristotle: *Al holy chirche holden hem in helle* (A-text, xi. 263).

285–8. Perhaps a gloss on Job xxxvi. 18 ‘Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.’

301. *menys*, the reading of the Towneley MS. is better than *mouys*, which appears to be a copyist’s error due to the similarity of *n* and *u*, *e* and *o*, in the handwriting of the time.

308. Judas hanged himself, according to Matthew xxvii. 3–5; Acts i. 18 gives a different account of his end. *Archedefell*: Ahithophel who hanged himself (2 Samuel xvii. 23) after the failure of his plot against David.

309. *Datan and Abiron*: see Numbers xvi.

313–16. ‘And all who do not care to learn my law (which I have left in the land newly, and which is to make known my Coming), and to go to my Sacrament, and those who will not believe in my Death and my Resurrection read in order—they are not true.’

338. *hou bus*, ‘you ought’; *bus*, a Northern contracted form of *behoves*, is here used as a personal verb, where *be bus*, ‘it behoves thee’, is normal. See note to XVII 196.

360. *moste*: read *maste* to rime with *taste*.

371. *Of his comyng*: the Towneley MS. reading of *Thi comyng* is possible.

378–80: Corrupt. The copy from which the extant MS. was made seems to have been indistinct here. The Towneley MS. has:

*Suffre thou never Thi sayntys to se  
The sorow of thaym that won in wo,  
Ay full of fyfth, and may not flee,*

which is more intelligible and nearer Psalm xvi. 10:

*Nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem.*

405. *louyng*: ‘praise’, esp. IV a 24 (note).

## XVII

**Dialect:** Late Yorkshire.

**Vocabulary:** Northern are *then* 108 (note), and *at* ‘to’ 235.

### **Inflections:**

**VERB:** pres. ind. 2 sg. *thou spekis* 206.

- 3 sg. *ligis* *he* 84; *he settis* 92; (*God*) *knowes* 202.

1 pl. *we swete* or *swynk* 195.

2 pl. *ye carp* (in rime) 360.

3 pl. *thay ryn* (in rime) 277, 357; beside *has* 345, *renys* 351.

pres. p. *liffand* 73, *bowand* 76, *wirkand* 120 (all in rime); beside *lifing* 47, 48; *standingyng* 416; *taryyng* 497.

strong pp. *rysen* 442; *fon* 'found' 503 is a Northern short form.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. nom. *she* 186; pl. *thay* 27; *thare* 75; *thaym* 31. (MS. *hame* 143 is miswritten for *thame*.)

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* appears as *ā* in rime: *old*: *cold*: *mold* (OE. *mōld*) 60-2, and probably *dold*: *old* 266-70; *sore*: *store*: *therfor*: *more* 91-4; but elsewhere remains *ā*, e.g. *draw* (OE. *drāgan*): *knaw* 245-6. The spelling with *o* is the commoner.

See notes on *emong* 400; *grufe* 463.

**Spelling:** Note the Northern spellings with *i*, *y* following a vowel to indicate length: *moyne* 'moon' 6, *bayle* 'bale' 26; *leyde* = *lede* 48; and conversely *fareste* 'fairest' 79, *fath* 'faith' 330.

The maritime associations of the play of *Noah* made it a special favourite with the Trinity House guild of master mariners and pilots at Hull; and some of their records of payments for acting and equipment are preserved, although the text of their play is lost (Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, pp. 370-1):  
*anno* To the minstrels, 6d.

1485. To Noah and his wife, 1s. 6d.

To Robert Brown playing God, 6d.

To the Ship-child, 1d.

To a shipwright for clinking Noah's ship, one day, 7d.  
 22 kids for shoring Noah's ship, 2d.

To a man clearing away the snow, 1d.

Straw for Noah and his children, 2d..

Mass, bellman, torches, minstrels, garland &c., 6s.

For mending the ship, 2*g*.

To Noah for playing, 1s.

To straw and grease for wheels,  $\frac{1}{2}$  d.

To the waits for going about with the ship, 6d.

1494. To Thomas Sawyr playing God, 10d.

To Jenkin Smith playing Noah, 1s.

To Noah's wife, 8d.

The clerk and his children, 1s. 6d.

To the players of Barton, 8d.

For a gallon of wine, 8d.

For three skins for Noah's coat, making it, and a rope to hang the ship in the kirk, 7s.

To dighting and gilding St. John's head, painting two tabernacles, beautifying the boat and over the table, 7s. 2d.

Making Noah's ship, £5. 8s.

Two wrights a day and a half, 1s. 6d.

A halser [i. e. hawser] 4 stone weight, 4s. 8d.

Rigging Noah's ship, 8d.

10. *is*: read *es* for the rime. Cp. note to I 128-9.

42. *and sythen*: MS. *in sythen*. Cp. note to VI 36.

49. *syn*: 3 pl. because *every liffyng leyde* is equivalent to a plural subject 'all men'.

52. *coueteis*: MS. *couetous*.

56. *alod*: 'wide-spread' (?). Apparently the same as *olod* in a poem ascribed to Rolle (ed. Horstman, vol. I, p. 73, l. 22) where it means 'dispersed'. But see Onions, *Medium Aevum*, I. 206.

57. *Sex hundredth yeris and od*: the *od* thrown in to rime, as Noah was exactly 600 years old according to Genesis vii. 6.

66. *and my fry shal with me fall*: 'and the children (that) I may have' (?).

88. *for syn sake*: 'because of sin'. Until modern times a genitive preceding *sake* usually has no *s*, e.g. *for goodness sake*. The genitive of *sin* historically had no *s* (OE. *synne*), but the omission in a Northern text is due rather to euphony than to survival of an old genitive form. Cp. *for tempest sake* I 177.

108. *then*: 'nor', a rare Northern usage, which is treated as an error here in England and Pollard's text, though it occurs again at l. 535. Conversely *nor* is used dialectally for *than*.

109. *Hym to mekill wyn*: 'to his great happiness'.

137 *take*: 'make', and so in l. 272.

167-71. *knowe*: *awe*. The rime requires *knāwe* or *ōwe*.

191. 'The worse (because) I see thee.'

196. *what thou ihynk*: 'what seems to you best', 'what you like'; *thou thynk* for *thee thynk*—the verb being properly impersonal; see notes to XVI 338 and VI 192.

200. *Stafford blew*: from the context this line might mean 'you are a scaremonger', for blue is the recognized colour of fear, and it might be supposed that 'Stafford blue' represents a material like 'Lincoln green'. But Mätzner is certainly right in interpreting the line 'you deserve a beating'. *Stafford blew* would then be the livid colour produced by blows. The reference, unless there is a play on *staff*, is obscure.

202. *led*: 'treated'.

211. *sory*: the rime requires *sary*.

220. *Mary*: the later *marry*! = 'by (the Virgin) Mary!' cp. l. 226. *So Peter!* 367 = 'by St. Peter!'

246. *to know*: 'to confess'.

247-8. *daw to ken*: 'to be recognized as stupid', 'a manifest fool'.

272. *castell*: note the rime with *sayll* : *nayll* : *fayll*, which

may be due to suffix substitution on the analogy of *catail* beside *catel* 'cattle'. For *take* see note to 137.

281. *chambre*: the rime points to a by-form *chamb(o)ur*, but the uninflected form is awkward. Cp. *thre chese chambres* 'three tiers of chambers' 129, where the construction is the same as the obsolete *three pair gloves*.

289-92. Read *lider, hider, togider*.

292. *must vs*: cp. l. 334 and note to VI 192.

298. 'There is other yarn on the reel', i.e. there is other business on hand.

320. *brether sam*: 'brothers both'. Some editors prefer to read *brother Sam* 'brother Shem'.

336 ff. Chaucer refers to the quarrels of Noah and his wife in the *Miller's Tale* (ll. 352 ff.):—

‘Hastou nat herd’, quod Nicholas, ‘also  
The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe  
Er that he myghte bryngē his wyf to shipe?  
Hym hadde be levere, I dar wel undertake,  
At thilke tyme,..than alle his wetheres blake,  
That she hadde had a shipe hirselfe alone.’

The tradition is old. In the splendid tenth-century Bodleian MS. Junius 11, which contains the so-called Caedmon poems, a picture of the Ark shows Noah's wife standing at the foot of the gangway, and one of her sons trying to persuade her to come in.

370. *Yei* is defensible; cp. l. 353. *Pe* 'the' has been suggested.

383. *Wat Wynk*: an alliterative nick-name like *Nicholl Nedy* in l. 405.

400. *emong*: OE. *gemang*, here rimes as in Modern English with *u* (OE. *iung* : *tunge* : *lungen*), cp. note to VI 109 ff.; but in ll. 244-7 it rimes with *lang* : *fang* : *gang*—all with original *a*.

417. *(floodis)*. Some such word is missing in the MS. Cp. ll. 454 f. and 426.

461. *How*: MS. *Now*. The correction is due to Professor Child. Initial capitals are peculiarly liable to be miscopied.

463. *grufe*: a Northern and Scottish form of the verb *grow*. The sb. *ro* 'rest' 237 sometimes has a parallel form *rufe*.

525. *stold*: for *stalled* 'fixed'. Note the rime words, which all have alternative forms *behald* : *bald* : *wald*.

## APPENDIX

### THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

**§ 1. GENERAL.** Gower's work shows that at the end of the century Latin and French still shared with English the place of a literary language. But their hold was precarious.

Latin was steadily losing ground. The Wyclite translation of the Bible threatened its hitherto unchallenged position as the language<sup>1</sup> of the Church; and the Renaissance had not yet come to give it a new life among secular scholars.

French was still spoken at the court; but in 1387 Trevisa remarks (p. 149) that it was no longer considered an essential part of a gentleman's education: and he records a significant reform—the replacement of French by English as the medium of teaching in schools. After the end of the century Anglo-French, the native development of Norman, was practically confined to legal use, and French of Paris was the accepted standard French. \*

English gained wherever Latin and French lost ground. But though the work of Chaucer, Gower, and Wyclif foreshadows the coming supremacy of the East Midland, or, more particularly, the London dialect, there was as yet no recognized standard of literary English. The spoken language showed a multiplicity of local varieties, and a writer adopted the particular variety that was most familiar to him. Hence it is almost true to say that every considerable text requires a special grammar.

\*Confusion is increased by the scribes. Nowadays a book is issued in hundreds or thousands of uniform copies, and within a few months of publication it may be read in any part of the world. In the fourteenth century a book was made known to readers only by the slow and costly multiplication of manuscripts. The copyist might work long after

the date of composition, and he would then be likely to modernize the language, which in its written form was not stable as it is at present: so of Barbour's *Bruce* the oldest extant copies were made nearly a century after Barbour's death. Again, if the dialect of the author were unfamiliar to the copyist, he might substitute familiar words and forms. Defective rimes often bear witness to these substitutions.

Nor have we to reckon only with copyists, who are as a rule careless rather than bold innovators. While books were scarce and many could not read them, professional minstrels and amateur reciters played a great part in the transmission of popular literature; and they, whether from defective memory or from belief in their own talents, treated the exact form and words of their author with scant respect. An extreme instance is given by the MSS. of *Sir Orfeo* at ll. 267-8:

Auchinleck MS.: *His harp, whereon wqs al his gle,  
He hidde in an holwe tre;*

Harley MS.: *He takeþ his harpe and makeþ hym gle,  
And lyþe al nyȝt vnder a tre;*

Ashmole MS.: *In a tre þat was holow  
þer was hys haule euyñ and morow.*

If the Ashmole MS. alone had survived we should have no hint of the degree of corruption.

And so, before the extant MSS. recorded the text, copyists and reciters may have added change to change, jumbling the speech of different men, generations, and places, and producing those 'mixed' texts which are the will-o'-the-wisps of language study.

Faced with these perplexities, beginners might well echo the words of Langland's pilgrims in search of Truth:

*This were a wikked way, but whoso hadde a gyde  
That wolde folwen vs eche a fote.*

There is no such complete guide, for the first parts of Morsbach's *Mittelenglische Grammatik*, Halle 1896, Richard Jordan's *Handbuch der Mittelenglischen Grammatik*, Heidelberg 1925 and Luick's *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, Leipzig 1914-, remain unfinished. Happily two distinguished scholars—Dr. Henry Bradley in *The Making of English* and his chapter in *The Cambridge*

*History of English Literature*, vol. i, Dr. O. Jespersen in *Growth and Structure of the English Language*—have given brief surveys of the whole early period which are at once elementary and authoritative. But for the details the student must rely on a mass of dissertations and articles of very unequal quality, supplemented by introductions to single texts, and, above all, by his own first-hand observations made on the texts themselves.

Some preliminary considerations will be helpful, though perhaps not altogether reassuring:

(i) A great part of the evidence necessary to a thorough knowledge of spoken Middle English has not come down to us, a considerable part remains unprinted, and the printed materials are so extensive and scattered that it is easy to overlook points of detail. For instance, it might be assumed from rimes in *Gawayne*, *Pearl*, and the Shropshire poet Myrc, that the falling together of OE. *-ang-*, *-ung-*, which is witnessed in NE. *among* (OE. *gemang*), *-monger* (OE. *mangere*), was specifically West Midland, if the occurrence of examples in Yorkshire (xvii 397-400) escaped notice. It follows that, unless a word or form is so common as to make the risk of error negligible, positive evidence—the certainty that it occurs in a given period or district—is immeasurably more important than negative evidence—the belief that it never did occur, or even the certainty that it is not recorded, in a period or district. For the same reason, the statement that a word or form is found 'in the early fourteenth century' or 'in Kent' should always be understood positively, and should not be taken to imply that it is unknown 'in the thirteenth century' or 'in Essex', as to which evidence may or may not exist.

(ii) It is necessary to clear the mind of the impression, derived from stereotyped written languages, that homogeneity and stability are natural states. Middle English texts represent a spoken language of many local varieties, all developing rapidly. So every linguistic fact should be thought of in terms of time, place, and circumstance, not because absolute precision in these points is attainable, but because the attempt to attain it helps to distinguish accurate knowledge from conclusions which are not free from doubt.

If the word or form under investigation can be proved to

belong to the author's original composition, exactness is often possible. In the present book, we know nearly enough the date of composition of extracts I, III, VIII, X, XI a, XII, XIII, XIV; the place of composition of I, III, X, XI a, XII, XIII, XVI, XVII (see map).

But if, as commonly happens, a form cannot be proved to have stood in the original, endless difficulties arise. It will be necessary first to determine the date of the MS. copy. This is exactly known for *The Bruce*, and there are few Middle English MSS. which the palaeographer cannot date absolutely within a half-century, and probably within a generation. The place where the MS. copy was written is known nearly enough for IV b, c, XII, XIV e, XV b, c (possibly Leominster), XVI, XVII; and ME. studies have still much to gain from a thorough inquiry into the provenance of MSS. Yet, when the extant copy is placed and dated, it remains to ask to what extent this MS. reproduces some lost intermediary of different date and provenance; how many such intermediaries there were between the author's original and our MS.; what each has contributed to the form of the surviving copy—questions usually unanswerable, the consideration of which will show the exceptional linguistic value of the *Ayenbyte*, where we have the author's own transcript exactly dated and localized, so that every word and form is good evidence.

Failing such ideal conditions, it becomes necessary to limit doubt by segregating for special investigation the elements that belong to the original composition. Hence the importance of rimes, alliteration, and rhythm, which a copyist or reciter is least likely to alter without leaving a trace of his activities.

**§ 2. DIALECTS.** At present any marked variation from the practice of educated English speakers might, if it were common to a considerable number of persons, be described as dialectal. But as there was no such recognized standard in the fourteenth century, it is most convenient to consider as dialectal any linguistic feature which had a currency in some English-speaking districts but not in all. For example, *þat* as a relative is found everywhere in the fourteenth century and is not dialectal; *þire* 'these' is recorded only in Northern districts, and so is dialectal. Again, *þ* represents OE. *ȝ* in

the South and Midlands, while the North retains  $\bar{a}$  (§ 7 b i) : since neither  $\bar{y}$  nor  $\bar{a}$  is general, both may be called dialectal.

If a few sporadic developments be excluded because they may turn up anywhere at any time, then, provided sufficient evidence were available,<sup>1</sup> it would be possible to mark the boundaries within which any given dialectal feature occurs at a particular period : we could draw the line south of which *þire* 'these' is not found, or the line bounding the district in which the Norse borrowing *kirke* occurs ; just as French investigators in *L'Atlas linguistique de la France* have shown the distribution of single words and forms in the modern French dialects.

Of more general importance is the fixing of boundaries for sound changes or inflexions that affect a large number of words, a task to which interesting contributions have been made in recent years on the evidence of place-names (see especially A. Brajdl, *Zur Geographie der altenglischen Dialekte*, Berlin 1915, which supplements the work of Pogatscher on the compounds of *street* and of Wyld on the ME. developments of OE. *y*). For example, on the evidence available, which does not permit of more than rough indications, OE.  $\bar{a}$  remains  $\bar{a}$ , and does not develop to  $\bar{y}$ , north of a line drawn west from the Humber (§ 7 b i) ; *-and(e)* occurs in the ending of the pres. p. as far south as a line starting west from the Wash (§ 13 ii) ; farther south again, a line between Norwich

<sup>1</sup> Sufficient evidence is not available. If in the year 1340 at every religious house in the kingdom a native of the district had followed the example of Michael of Northgate, and if all their autograph copies had survived, we should have a very good knowledge of Middle English at that time. If the process had been repeated about every ten years the precision of our knowledge would be greatly increased. For the area in which any feature is found is not necessarily constant : we know that in the pres. p. the province of *-ing* was extending throughout the fourteenth century ; that the inflexion *-es* in 3 sg. pres. ind. was a Northern and North-Midland feature in the fourteenth century, but had become general in London by Shakespeare's time. And though less is known about the spread of sound changes as distinct from analogical substitutions, it cannot be assumed that their final boundaries were reached and fixed in a moment. There is reason to regret the handicap that has been imposed on ME. studies by the old practice of writing in Latin or French the documents and records which would otherwise supply the exactly dated and localized specimens of English that are most necessary to progress.

and Birmingham gives the northern limit for *Stratton* forms as against *Stretton* (§ 8 iv, note).<sup>1</sup> The direction of all these lines is roughly east and west, yet no two coincide. But if the developments of OE. *y* (§ 7 b ii) are mapped out, *u* appears below a line drawn athwart from Liverpool to London, and normal *e* east of a line drawn north and south from the western border of Kent. Almost every important feature has thus its own limits, and the limits of one may cross the limits of another.

What then is a ME. dialect? The accepted classification is

Southern	{	South-Western	= OE. West Saxon
		South-Eastern	= OE. Kentish
Midland	{	East Midland	= OE. Mercian
		West Midland	

Northern = OE. Northumbrian

with the Thames as boundary between Southern and Midland, and the Humber between Midland and Northern. And yet of five actual limiting lines taken at random, only the first coincides approximately with the line of Humber or Thames.

Still the classification rests on a practical truth. Although each dialectal feature has its own boundaries, these are not set by pure chance. Their position is to some extent governed by old tribal and political divisions, by the influence of large towns which served as commercial and administrative centres, and by relative ease of communication. Consequently, linguistic features are roughly grouped, and it is *a priori* likely that London and Oxford would have more features in common than would London and York, or Oxford and Hull; and similarly it is likely that for a majority of phenomena York and Hull would stand together against London and Oxford. Such a grouping was recognized in

<sup>1</sup> The evidence of place-names does not agree entirely with the evidence of texts. *Havelok*, which is localized with reasonable certainty in North Lincolnshire, has (*a*)*dradd* in rimes that appear to be original, and these indicate a North-Eastern extension of the area in which OE. *stræt*, *drædan* appear for normal Anglian *strît*, *dræda*(*h*). This evidence, supported by rimes in Robert of Brunne, is too early to be disposed of by the explanation of borrowing from other dialects, nor is the testimony of place-names so complete and unequivocal as to justify an exclusive reliance upon it.

the fourteenth century. Higden and his authorities distinguish Northern and Southern speech (xiii 6); in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play*, ll. 201 ff., when Mak pretends to be a yeoman of the king, he adopts the appropriate accent, and is promptly told to 'take out that Sothren tothe'. In the *Reeves Tale* Chaucer makes the clerks speak their own Northern dialect, so we may be sure that he thought of it as a unity.

But had Chaucer been asked exactly where this dialect was spoken, he would probably have replied, *Fer in the North,—I kan nat telle where.* A dialect has really no precise boundaries; its borders are nebulous; and throughout this book 'Southern', 'Northern', &c., are used vaguely, and not with any sharply defined limits in mind. The terms may, however, be applied to precise areas, so long as the boundaries of single dialect features are not violently made to conform. It is quite accurate to say that *-and(e)* is the normal ending of the pres. p. north of the Humber, and that *u* for OE. *y* is found south of the Thames and west of London, provided it is not implied that the one should not be found south of the Humber, or the other north of the Thames. Both in fact occur in *Gawayne* (Cheshire or Lancashire); and in general the language of the Midlands was characterized by the overlapping of features which distinguish the North from the South.

From what has been said it should be plain that the localization of a piece of Middle English on the evidence of language alone calls for an investigation of scope and delicacy. Where the facts are so complex the mechanical application of rules of thumb may give quick and specious results, but must in the end deaden the spirit of inquiry, which is the best gift a student can bring to the subject.

§ 3. VOCABULARY. The readiness of English speakers to adopt words from foreign languages becomes marked in fourteenth-century writings. But the classical element which is so pronounced in modern literary English is still unimportant. There are few direct borrowings from Latin, and these, like *obitie* xvi 269, are for the most part taken from the technical language of the Church. The chief sources of foreign words are Norse and French.

(a) **Norse.** Although many Norse words first appear in English in late texts, they must have come into the spoken language before the end of the eleventh century, because the Scandinavian settlements ceased after the Norman Conquest. The invaders spoke a dialect near enough to OE. to be intelligible to the Angles; and they had little to teach of literature or civilization. Hence the borrowings from Norse are all popular; they appear chiefly in the Midlands and North, where the invaders settled; and they witness the intimate fusion of two kindred languages. From Norse we get such common words as *anger*, *both*, *call*, *egg*, *hit*, *husband*, *ill*, *law*, *loose*, *low*, *meek*, *take*, *till* (prep.), *want*, *weak*, *wing*, *wrong*, and even the plural forms of the 3rd personal pronoun (§ 12).

It is not always easy to distinguish Norse from native words, because the two languages were so similar during the period of borrowing, and Norse words were adopted early enough to be affected by all ME. sound changes. But there were some dialectal differences between ON. and OE. in the ninth and tenth centuries, and these afford the best criteria of borrowing. For instance in ME. we have *bouȝ*, *bɔf* (ON. *þóh* for *\*þauh*) beside *bei(h)* (OE. *bē(a)h*) II 433; *ay* (ON. *ei*) 'ever' XVI 293 beside *oo* (OE. *ā*) XV b 7; *waiȝ* (ON. *veik-r*) VIII b 23, where OE. *wāc* would yield *wāk*; the forms *wāre* XVI 17 (note) and *wāpin* XIV b 15 are from ON. *várum*, *vápn*, whereas *wērē(n)* and *wēppen* V 154 represent OE. (Anglian) *wēron*, *wēpn*. So we have the pairs *awe* (ON. *agi*) I 83 and *ay* (OE. *ege*) II 571; *neuen* (ON. *nefna*) 'to name' XVII 12 and *nem(p)ne* (OE. *nemnan*) II 600; *rot* (ON. *rōt*) II 256 and *wort* (OE. *wyrt*) VIII a 303; *sterne*, *starne* (ON. *stjarna*) XVII 8, 423 and native *sterre*, *starre* (OE. *steorra*); *systyr* (ON. *systir*) I 112 and *soster* (OE. *sweostor*) XV g 10; *werre*, *warre* (ON. *verri*) XVI 154 (note), 334 and native *werse*, *wars* (OE. *wyrsa*) XVI 200, XVII 191; *wylle* (ON. *vill-r*) V 16 and native *wylde* (OE. *wilde*) XV b 19.

Note that in Norse borrowings the consonants *g*, *k* remain stops where they are palatalized in English words: *garn* XVII 298, *giue*, *gele* (ON. *garn*, *gefa*, *geta*) beside *zarn*, *ziue*, *for-zete* (OE. *gearn*, *giefan*, *for-gielan*); *kirke* (ON. *kirkja*) beside *chirche* (OE. *cirice*). Similarly OE. initial *sc-* regularly

becomes ME. *sh-*, so that most words beginning with *sk-*, like *sky*, *skin*, *skyfle* vi 209 (English *shift*), *skirte* (English *shirt*), are Norse; see the alliterating words in v 99.

There is an excellent monograph by E. Björkman: *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English*, 1900.

(b) **French.** Most early borrowings from French were again due to invasion and settlement. But the conditions of contact were very different. Some were unfavourable to borrowing: the Normans, who were relatively few, were dispersed throughout the country, and not, like the Scandinavians, massed in colonies; and their language had little in common with English. So the number of French words in English texts is small before the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Other conditions made borrowing inevitable: the French speakers were the governing class; they gradually introduced a new system of administration and new standards of culture; and they had an important literature to which English writers turned for their subject-matter and their models of form. Fourteenth-century translators adopt words from their French originals so freely (see note at p. 234, foot), that written Middle English must give a rather exaggerated impression of the extent of French influence on the spoken language. But a few examples will show how many common words are early borrowings from French: nouns like *country*, *face*, *place*, *river*, *courtesy*, *honour*, *joy*, *justice*, *mercy*, *pity*, *reason*, *religion*, *war*; adjectives like *close*, *large*, *poor*; and verbs *sry*, *pay*, *please*, *serve*, *use*.

Anglo-French was never completely homogeneous, and it was constantly supplemented as a result of direct political, commercial, and literary relations with France. Hence words were sometimes adopted into ME. in more than one French dialectal form. For instance, Late Latin *ca-* became *cha-* in most French dialects, but remained *ca-* in the North of France: hence ME. *catch* and (*pur*)*chase*, *catel* and *chastel*, *kanel* 'neck' v 230 and *chanel* 'channel' XIII a 57. So Northern French preserves initial *w-*, for which other French dialects substitute *g(u)*: hence *Wowayn* v 121 beside *Gawayn* v 4, &c. (see note to v 121). Again, in Anglo-French, *a* before nasal + consonant alternates with *au*:—*dance*: *daunce*; *chance*: *chaunce*; *change*: *chaunge*; *chambre* XVII 281: *chaum-*

ber II 100. English still has the verbs *launch* and *lance*, which are ultimately identical.

As borrowing extended over several centuries, the ME. form sometimes depends on the date of adoption. Thus Latin *fidem* becomes early French *feid*, later *fei*, and later still *foi*. ME. has both *feiþ* and *fay*, and by Spenser's time *foy* appears.

The best study of the French element in ME. is still that of D. Behrens: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der französischen Sprache in England*, 1886. A valuable supplement, dealing chiefly with Anglo-French as the language of the law, is the chapter by F. W. Maitland in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i.

**§ 4. HANDWRITING.** In the ME. period two varieties of script were in use, both developed from the Caroline minuscule which has proved to be the most permanent contribution of the schools of Charlemagne. The one, cursive and flourished, is common in charters, records, and memoranda; see C. H. Jenkinson and C. Johnson, *Court Hand*, 2 vols., Oxford 1915. The other, in which the letters are separately written, with few flourishes or adaptations of form in combination, is the 'book hand', so called because it is regularly used for literary texts. Between the extreme types there are many gradations; and fifteenth-century copies, such as the Cambridge MS. of Barbour's *Bruce*, show an increasing use of cursive forms, which facilitate rapid writing.

The shapes of letters were not always so distinct as they are in print, so that copyists of the time, and even modern editors, are liable to mistake one letter for another. Each hand has its own weaknesses, but the letters most commonly misread are:—

*e:o* e. g. *Beuo* for *Boou* II 59; *wroche* for *wreche* II 333; *teches* IV b 60, where *toches* (foot-note) is probably right; *pesible* (MS. *possible*) XI b 67.

*u:n* (practically indistinguishable) e. g. *menys* (MS. *mouw*) XVI 301; *skayned* (edd. *skayued*) V 99; *ryuez* or *rynez* V 222 (note). This is only a special case of the confusion of letters and combinations formed by repetition of the downstroke, e. g. *u*, *n*, *m*, and *i* (which is not always distinguished by a stroke above). Hence *dim* II 285 where modern editors have *dun*, although *i* has the distinguishing stroke.

*y:þ* e.g. *ye* (MS. *þe*) XIV *d* 11; see note to XV *a* 12. Confusion is increased by occasional transference to *þ* of the dot which historically may stand over *y*. *ȝ* for *þ* initially, as in XVI 170, is more often due to confusion of the letters *þ:ȝ* and subsequent preference of *ȝ* for *y* in spelling (§ 5 i) than to direct confusion of *þ:ȝ*, which are not usually very similar in late Middle English script.

*þ:h* e.g. *doh* (MS. *doh*) XV *b* 22; and notes to XII *b* 116, XVI 62.

*þ:v* e.g. *vousour* (edd. *bonsour*) II 363.

*c:t* e.g. *cunesmen* (edd. *tunesmen*) XV *g* 6 (note); *top* (edd. *cop*) ibid. 16; see note to XIII *a* 7.

*f:s* (= *s*) e.g. *slang* (variant *flang*) X 53.

*l:s* (= *s*) e.g. *al* (edd. *as*) II 108.

*l:k* e.g. *lyþȝ* (MS. *lyþȝ*) VI 9.

§ 5. SPECIAL LETTERS. Two letters now obsolete are common in fourteenth-century MSS.: *þ* and *ȝ*.

*þ*: 'thorn', is a rune, and stands for the voiced and voiceless sounds now represented by *th* in *this*, *thin*. The gradual displacement of *þ* by *th*, which had quite a different sound in classical Latin (note to VIII *a* 23), may be traced in the MSS. printed (except x, XII). *þ* remained longest in the initial position, but by the end of the fifteenth century was used chiefly in compendia like *þe* 'the', *þt* 'that'.

*ȝ*: called 'ȝoȝ' or 'yogh', derives from *ȝ*, the OE. script form of the letter *g*. It was retained in ME. after the Caroline form *ȝ* had become established in vernacular texts, to represent a group of spirant sounds:

(i) The initial spirant in *ȝoked* IX 253 (OE. *geoc-*), *ȝere* I 151 (OE. *gēar*), where the sound was approximately the same as in our *yoke*, *year*. Except in texts specially influenced by the tradition of French spelling, *y* (which is ambiguous owing to its common use as a vowel = *i*) is less frequent than *ȝ* initially. Medially the palatal spirant is represented either by *ȝ* or *y*: *eȝe* (OE. *ē(a)ȝ-*) XV *c* 14 beside *eyen* VIII *a* 168; *iseȝe* (OE. *gesegen*) XIV *c* 88 beside *iseye* XIV *c* 16. The medial guttural spirant more commonly develops to *w* in the fourteenth century: *awe* (ON. *agi*) I 83, *felawe* (ON. *fēlagi*) XIV *d* 7, *halwes* (OE. *halg-*), beside *aȝ-* v 267, *felaz-* v 83, *halȝ-* v 54.

(ii) The medial or final spirant, guttural or palatal, which

is lost in standard English, but still spelt in *nought*, *through*, *night*, *high*: ME. *noȝt*, *þurȝ*, *nyȝt*, *hyȝ*: OE. *noht*, *þurh*, *niht*, *hēh*. The ME. sound was probably like that in German *ich*, *ach*. The older spelling with *h* is occasionally found; more often *ch* as in *mycht* x 17; but the French spelling *gh* gains ground throughout the century. Abnormal are *write* for *wrighte* xvi 230, *wytes*, *nytes* for *wyzles*, *nyzles* xv i 19 f.

(iii) As these sounds weakened in late Southern ME., *ȝ* was sometimes used without phonetic value, or at the most to reinforce a long *i*: e.g. *Engliȝsch* xi a 28, 37, &c.; *kyȝn* 'kine' ix 256.

N.B.—Entirely distinct in origin and sound value, but identical in script form, is *ȝ*, the minuscule form of *ȝ*, in *Azone* (= *Azone*) i 105, *clyfȝez* 'cliffs' v 10, &c. It would probably be better to print *ȝ* in such words.

§ 6. SPELLING. Modern English spelling, which tolerates almost any inconsistency in the representation of sounds provided the same word is always spelt in the approved way, is the creation of printers, schools, and dictionaries. A Middle English writer was bound by no such arbitrary rules. Michael of Northgate, whose autograph MS. survives, writes *diaknen* iii 5 and *dyacne* 9; *wyf* 22, *wif* 23, *wif* 37; *bouzond* 30 and *þousend* 34. Yet his spelling is not irrational. The comparative regularity of his own speech, which he reproduced directly, had a normalizing influence; and by natural habit he more often than not solved the same problem of representation in the same way. Scribes, too, like printers in later times, found a measure of consistency convenient, and the spelling of some transcripts, e.g. *i* and *x*, is very regular. If at first ME. spelling appears lawless to a modern reader, it is because of the variety of dialects represented in literature, the widely differing dates of the MSS. printed, and the tendency of copyists to mix their own spellings with those of their original.

The following points must be kept in mind:

(i) *i* : *y* as vowels are interchangeable. In some MSS. (for instance, i) *y* is used almost exclusively; in others (viii a) it is preferred for distinctness in the neighbourhood of *u*, *n*, *m*, so that the scribe writes *hym*, but *his*.

(ii) *ie* is found in later texts for long close ē: *chiere* XII a 120, *flietende* XII a 157, *diemed* XII b 216.

(iii) *ui* (*uy*), in the South-West and West Midlands, stands for ū (sounded as in French *amuser*): *puit* XIV c 12; *vnkuuynde* XIV c 103. The corresponding short ū is spelt *u*: *hull* 'hill', &c.

(iv) Quite distinct is the late Northern addition of *i* (*y*), to indicate the long vowels ā, ē, ū: *neid* X 18, *noyne* 'noon' X 67.

(v) *ou* (*ow*) is the regular spelling of long ū (sounded as in *too*): *hous*, *now*, *founden*, &c.

(vi) *o* is the regular spelling for short *u* (sounded as in *put*) in the neighbourhood of *u*, *m*, *n*, because if *u* is written in combination with these letters an indistinct series of down-strokes results. Hence *loue* but *luf*, *come* infin., *sone* 'son', *dronken* 'drunk'. In *Ayenbyte* *o* for ū is general, e.g. *grochinge* III 10. In other texts it is common in *bole* 'but'.

(vii) *u* : *v* are not distinguished as consonant and vowel. *v* is preferred in initial position, *u* medially or finally: *valay* 'valley', *vnder* 'under', *vuel* (= ūvel) 'evil', *loue* 'love'. (Note that in XII the MS. distinction of *v* and *u* is not reproduced.)

(viii) So *t*, and its longer form *j*, are not distinguished as vowel and consonant. In this book *i* is printed throughout, and so stands initially for the sound of our *j* in *toy*, *iuggement*, &c.

(ix) *c* : *k* for the sounds in *kit*, *cot*, are often interchangeable; but *k* is preferred before palatal vowels *e*, *i* (*y*); and *c* before *o*, *u*. See the alliterating words in V 52, 107, 128, 153, 272, 283.

(x) *c* : *s* alternate for voiceless *s*, especially in French words: *sitē* 'city' VII 66, *resayue* 'receive' V 8, *vyse* 'vice' V 307, *falce* V 314; but also in *race* (ON. *rás*) V 8 beside *rase* XVII 429.

(xi) *s* : *z* (*ȝ*) are both used for voiced *s*, the former predominating: *kysedes* beside *razȝez* V 283; *bouzond* III 30 beside *bousend* III 34. But *ȝ* occasionally appears for voiceless *s*: (*az-)*ȝez 'awe-less' V 267, *forȝ* 'force' 'waterfall' V 105.

(xii) *sh* : *sch* : *ss* are all found for modern *sh*, O.E. *sc* : *shuld* I 50; *schert* I 230; *sserte* III 40; but *sal* 'shall', *suld*

'should' in Northern texts represent the actual Northern pronunciation in weakly stressed words.

(xiii) *v* : *w*: In late Northern MSS. *v* is often found for initial *w*: *vithall* x 9, *Valter* x 36. The interchange is less common in medial positions: *in swndir* x 106.

(xiv) *wh*- : *qu(h)-* : *w*- : -*wh*- is a spelling for *hw*- . In the South the aspiration is weakened or lost, and *w* is commonly written, e. g. viii b. In the North the aspiration is strong, and the sound is spelt *qu(h)-*, e. g. *quheliš* 'wheels' x 17. Both *qu-* and *wh-* are found in *Gawayne*. The development in later dialects is against the assumption that *hw-* became *kw-* in pronunciation.

See also § 5.

The whole system of ME. spelling was modelled on French, and some of the general features noted above (e. g. ii, iii, v, vi, x) are essentially French. But, particularly in early MSS., there are a number of exceptional imitations. Sometimes the spelling represents a French scribe's attempt at English pronunciation: *foret* in xv g 18 stands for *forb*, where -*rɒ* with strongly trilled *r* was difficult to a foreigner; and occasionally such distortions are found as *knɪʃ*, *knɪt*, and even *kint* (*Layamon*, *Havelok*) for *knɪʒt*, which had two awkward consonant groups. More commonly the copyist, accustomed to write both French and English, chose a French representation for an English sound. So *st* for *ht* appears regularly in xv e: *seuenist* 'sennight', and xv g: *iboust* 'bought', &c. The explanation is that in French words like *beste* 'bête', *gist* 'git', *s* became only a breathing before it disappeared; and *h* in ME. *ht* weakened to a similar sound, as is shown by the rimes with *Kryste* 'Christ' in vi 98-107. Hence the French spelling *st* is occasionally substituted for English *ht*. Again, in borrowings from French, *an* + consonant alternates with *aun*: *dance* or *daunce*; *change* or *chaunge* (p. 273); and by analogy we have *Irlande* or *Irlaunde* in xv d. Another exceptional French usage, -*tz* for final voiceless -*s*, is explained at p. 259, top.

§ 7. SOUND CHANGES. (a) Vowel Quantity. No fourteenth-century writer followed the early example of Orm. Marks of quantity are not used in fourteenth-century texts; doubling of long vowels is not an established rule; and

there are no strictly quantitative metres, or treatises on pronunciation. Consequently it is not easy to determine how far the quantity of the vowels in any given text has been affected by the very considerable changes that occurred in the late OE. and ME. periods.

Of these the chief are:

(i) In unstressed syllables original long vowels tend to become short. Hence *ūs* (OE. *ūs*), and *bōte* (OE. *būtan*) 'but', which are usually unstressed.

(ii) All long vowels are shortened in stressed close syllables (i.e., *usually*, when they are followed by two consonants): e.g. *kēpen*, pa. t. *kēpte*, pp. *kēpt*; *hūsband* beside *hous*; *wimmen* (from *wīf-men*) beside *wīf*.

*Exception.* Before the groups *-ld*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-rð*, *-mb*, a short vowel is lengthened in OE. unless a third consonant immediately follows. Hence, before any of these combinations, length may be retained in ME.: e.g. *fēnd* 'fiend', *binden*, *child*; but *children*.

(iii) Short vowels *ā*, *ē*, *ō* are lengthened in stressed open syllables (i.e., *usually*, when they are followed by a single consonant with a following vowel): *tā|ke* > *tāke*; *mē|te* > *mēte* 'meat'; *brō|ken* > *brōken*. To what extent *ī* and *ū* were subject to the same lengthening in Northern districts is still disputed. Normally they remain short in South and S. Midlands, e.g. *drūen* pp.; *lōuen* = *lūven* 'to love'.

There are many minor rules and many exceptions due to analogy; but roughly it may be taken that ME. vowels are:

*short* when unstressed; •

*short* before two consonants, except *-ld*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-rð*, *-mb*;

*long* (except *i(y)*, *u*) before a single medial consonant;

otherwise of the quantity shown in the Glossary for the OE. or ON. etymon.

(b) **Vowel Quality.** The ME. sound-changes are so many and so obscure that it will be possible to deal only with a few that contribute most to the diversity of dialects, and it happens that the particular changes noticed all took effect before the fourteenth century.

(i) OE. and ON. *ā* develop to long open *ē* (sounded as in *broad*), first in the South and S. Midlands, later in the N. Midlands. In the North *ā* (sounded approximately as

in *father*) remains: e.g. *bane* 'bone' IV a 54, *balde* 'bold' IV a 51. The boundary seems to have been a line drawn west from the Humber, and this approximates to the dividing line in the modern dialects. There are of course instances of *ȝ* to the north and of *ā* to the south of the Humber, since border speakers would be familiar with both *ā* and *ȝ*, or would have intermediate pronunciations; and poets might use convenient rimes from neighbouring dialects.

(ii) OE. *ȝ* (deriving from Germanic *ū* followed by *i*) appears *normally* in E. Midlands and the North as *i* (*ȝ*): e.g. *kyn*, *hill* (OE. *cȳ*, *hyll*). In the South-East, particularly Kent, it appears as *ɛ*: *kɛn*, *hell*. In the South-West, and in W. Midlands, it commonly appears as *u*, *ui* (*uy*), with the sound of short or long *u*. London was apparently at a meeting point of the *u*, *i*, and *e* boundaries, because all the forms appear in fourteenth-century *Londōn* texts, though *ȝ* and *ɛ* gradually give place to *ɛ*. The extension of *ȝ* forms to the North-West is shown by *Gawayne*, and a line drawn from London to Liverpool would give a rough idea of the boundary. But within this area unrounding of *ȝ* to *i* seems to have been progressive during the century. N.B.—It is dangerous to jump to conclusions from isolated examples. Before *r* + consonant *e* is sometimes found in all dialects, e.g. *schert* II 230. *Church*, spelt with *u*, *i*, or *e*, had by etymology OE. *i*, not *ȝ*. And in Northern texts there are a number of *e*-spellings in open syllables, both for OE. *ȝ* and *i*.

(c) **Consonants:**

(i) *f* > *v* (initial): this change, which dates back to OE. times, is carried through in *Ayenbyte*: e.g. *uele uayre uorbisnen* = Midland 'fele fayre forbisnes'. In some degree it extended over the whole of the South.

(ii) *s* > *z* (initial), parallel to the change of *f* to *v*, is regularly represented in spelling in the *Ayenbyte*: *zome* 'some', &c. Otherwise *z* is rare in spelling, but the voiced initial sound probably extended to most of the Southern districts where it survives in modern dialect.

§ 8. PRONUNCIATION. One of the best ways of studying ME. pronunciation is to learn by heart a few lines of verse in a consistent dialect, and to correct their repetition as more

precise knowledge is gained. The spelling can be relied on as very roughly phonetic if the exceptional usages noted in § 6 are kept in mind. Supplementary and controlling information is provided by the study of rimes, of alliteration, and of the history of English and French sounds.

**Consonants.** Where a consonant is clearly pronounced in Modern English, its value is nearly enough the same for ME. But modern spelling preserves many consonants that have been lost in speech, and so is rather a hindrance than a help to the beginner in ME. For instance, the initial sounds in ME. *knizt* and *nizt* were not the same, for *knizt* alliterates always with *k*- (v. 43, 107) and *nizt* with *n*- (vii. 149); and initial *wr*- in *wringe*, *wriȝte* is distinct from initial *r*- in *ring*, *riȝt* (cp. alliteration in viii. a. 168, v. 136). Nor can *wriȝte* rhyme with *write* in a careful fourteenth-century poem. In words like *lerne*, *doghter*, *r* was pronounced with some degree of trilling. And although there are signs of confusion in late MSS. (iv. a, xvi, xvii), double consonants were generally distinguished from single: *sonne* 'sun' was pronounced *sū-ne*, and so differed from *sone* 'son', which was pronounced *sū-ne* (§ 6 vi).

**Vowels.** Short vowels *ã*, *ɛ*, *i*, *ɔ*, *ü* (§ 6 vi) were pronounced respectively as in French *patté*, English *pet*, *pit*, *pot*, *put*. Final unstressed *-e* was generally syllabic, with a sound something like the final sound in *China* (§ 9).

The long vowels *ã*, *ɛ*, *ü* (§ 6 v) were pronounced approximately as in *father*, *machine*, *crude*. But *ɛ* and *ɔ* present special difficulties, because the spelling failed to make the broad distinction between open *ǭ* and close *ǭ*, open *ɛ* and close *ɛ*—a distinction which, though relative only (depending on the greater or less opening of the mouth passage), is proved to have been considerable by ME. rimes, and by the earlier and subsequent history of the long sounds represented in ME. by *e*, *o*.

(i) Open *ǭ* (as in *broad*) derives:

(a) from OE. *ā*, according to § 7 b i: OE. *brād*, *bāt*, *báld* > ME. *brǭd*, *bǭt*, *bǭld* > NE. *broad*, *boat*, *bold*.

The characteristic modern spelling is thus *oa*.

(b) from OE. *ð* in open syllables according to § 7 a iii: OE. *brðcen* > ME. *brðke(n)* > NE. *broken*.

NOTE.—In many texts the rimes indicate a distinction in pronunciation between *þ* derived from OE. *ð* and *þ* derived from OE. *þ*, and the distinction is still made in NW. Midland dialects.

(ii) Close *þ* (pronounced rather as in French *beau* than *as* in standard English *so* which has developed a diphthong *ɔu*), derives from OE. *ð*: OE. *gðs*, *dðm*, *gðld* > ME. *gþs*, *dþm*, *gþld* > NE. *goose*, *doom*, *gold*. The characteristic modern spelling is *oo*.

NOTE.—(1) After consonant + *w*, *þ* often develops in ME. to *þ*: OE. (*al*)*swā*, *twā* > ME. (*al*)*sþ*, *twþ* > later (*al*)*sþ*, *twþ*.

(2) In Scotland and the North *þ* becomes regularly a sound (perhaps *ð*) spelt *u*: *gðd* > *gud*, *bþd* > *blud*, &c.

Whereas the distribution of *þ* and *þ* is practically the same for all ME. dialects, the distinction of open *ɛ* and close *ɛ* is not so regular, chiefly because the sounds from which they derive were not uniform in OE. dialects. For simplicity, attention will be confined to the London dialect, as the forerunner of modern Standard English.

(iii) South-East Midland open *ɛ* (pronounced as in *there*) derives:

(a) from OE. (Anglian) *æ*: Anglian *dæl* > SE. Midl. *dɛl* > NE. *deal*;

(b) from OE. *ea*: OE. *bēatan* > ME. *bēte(n)* > NE. *beat*;

(c) from OE. *ɛ* in open syllables according to § 7 a iii: OE. *mēte* > ME. *mēte* > NE. *meat*.

The characteristic modern spelling is *ea*.

(iv) South-East Midland close *ɛ* (pronounced as in French *éte*) derives:

(a) from OE. (Anglian) *ē* of various origins: Anglian *hēr*, *mēta(n)*, (*ge*)*lēfa(n)* > SE. Midl. *hēre*, *mēte(n)*, *lēue(n)* > NE. *here*, *meet*, (*be*)*lieve*.

(b) from OE. *eo*: OE. *dēop*, *bēof* > ME. *dēp*, *bēf* (*brief*) > NE. *deep*, *thief*.

The characteristic modern spellings are *ee*, and *ie* which already in ME. often distinguishes the close sound (§ 6 ii).

NOTE.—The distinction made above does not apply in South-Eastern (Kentish), because this dialect has ME. *ea*, *ia*, *ya* for OE. *ea* (iii b), and OE. *ē* for Anglian *æ* (iii a). Nor does it hold for South-Western, because the West Saxon

dialect of OE. had *geliefan* for Anglian *gelēfa(n)* (iv a). West Saxon also had *strēt*, *-drēdan*, where normal Anglian had *strēt*, *-drēda(n)*, but the distribution of the place-names •*Stratton* beside *Stretton*, and of the pa. t. and pp. *dradd(e)* •beside *dredd(e)* (p. 270 and n.), shows that the *æ* forms were common in the extreme South and the East of the Anglian area; so that in fourteenth-century London both *ē* and *ɛ* might occur in such words, as against regular West Midland and Northern *ē*.

In NE. Midland and Northern texts some *ē* sounds which we should expect to be distinguished as open and close rime together, especially before dental consonants, e. g. *zēde* (OE. *ēode*): *lēde* (Anglian *læda(n)*) 1 15<sup>2</sup>-3.

§ 9. INFLEXIONS. Weakening and levelling of inflexions is continuous from the earliest period of English. The strong stress falling regularly on the first or the stem syllable produced as reflex a tendency to indistinctness in the unstressed endings. The disturbing influence of foreign conquest played a secondary but not a negligible part, as may be seen from a comparison of some verbal forms in the North and the N. Midlands, where Norse influence was strongest, with those of the South, where it was inconsiderable:

	Normal OE.	Early Sth. N.E.	Early Nth. and N.Midl.	Old Norse
Infin.	... <i>drīfan</i>	<i>driue(n)</i>	<i>driue</i>	<i>drīfa</i>
Pres. p.	... <i>drīfende</i>	<i>driuinde</i>	<i>driuande</i>	<i>drīfandi</i>
Pp. strong .	<i>gedrīfen</i>	<i>ydrīue</i>	<i>driuen</i>	<i>drīfenn</i>

and although tangible evidence of French influence on the flexional system is wanting (for occasional borrowings like *gowles artelykes* ix 314 are mere literary curiosities), every considerable settlement of foreign speakers, especially when they come as conquerors, must shake the traditions of the language of the conquered. A third cause of uncertainty was the interaction of English dialects in different stages of development.

The practical sense of the speakers controlled and balanced these disruptive factors. There is no better field than Middle English for a study of the processes of vigorous growth: the regularizing of exceptional and inconvenient forms; the choice

of the most distinctive among a group of alternatives ; the invention of new modes of expression ; the discarding of what has become useless.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the inflectional endings are : *-e* ; *-en* ; *-ene* (weak gen. pl.) ; *-er* (comparative) ; *-es* ; *-est* ; with *-ep*, *-ede* (*-de*, *-te*) ; *-ed* (*-d*, *-t*) ; *-yng* (*-inde*, *-ende*, *-ande*), which are verbal only.

NOTE.—(a) Sometimes one of these inflexions may be substituted for another : e. g. when *-es* replaces *-e* as the Northern ending of the 1st sg. pres. ind. Such analogical substitutions must be distinguished from phonetic developments.

(b) In disyllabic inflexions like *-ede*, *-yng* (*-ande*), final *-e* is lost early in the North. In polysyllables it is dropped everywhere during the century.

(c) The indistinct sound of flexional *-e-* covered by a consonant is shown by spellings with *-i-*, *-y-* : *woundis* x 51 ; *madist* xi b 214 ; *blyndib* xi b 7 ; *fulfillid* xvi 6 ; *etin* xiv b 76 ; *brokynne* xvi 195. And, especially in West Midland texts, *-us*, *-un* (*-on*) appear for *-es*, *-en* : *mannus* xi b 234 ; *foundun* xi a 47 ; *laghton* vii 119. Complete syncope sometimes occurs : *days* i 198, &c.

Otherwise all the inflexions except *-e*, *-en*, are fairly stable throughout the century.

**-en** : In the North *-en* is found chiefly in the strong pp., where it is stable. In the South (except in the strong pp.) it is better preserved, occurring rarely in the dat. sg. of adjectives, e. g. *onen* iii 4, dat. pl. of nouns, e. g. *diaknen* iii 5, and in the infinitive ; more commonly in the weak pl. of nouns, where it is stable, and in the pa. t. pl., where it alternates with *-e*. In the Midlands *-en*, alternating with *-e*, is also the characteristic ending of the pres. ind. pl. As a rule (where the reduced ending *-e* is found side by side with *-en*) *-e* is used before words beginning with a consonant, and *-en* before words beginning with a vowel or *h*, to avoid hiatus. But that the preservation of *-en* does not depend purely on phonetic considerations is proved by its regular retention in the Northern strong pp., and its regular reduction to *-e* in the corresponding Southern form.

**-e** : Wherever *-en* was reduced, it reinforced final *-e*, which

so became the meeting point of all the inflexions that were to disappear before Elizabethan times.

-e was the ending of several verbal forms; of the weak adjective and the adjective pl.; of the dat. sg. of nouns; and of adverbs like *faste*, *deepe*, as distinguished from the corresponding adjectives *fast*, *deep*.

That -e was pronounced is clear from the metres of Chaucer, Gower, and most other Southern and Midland writers of the time. For centuries the rhythm of their verse was lost because later generations had become so used to final -e as a mere spelling that they did not suspect that it was once syllabic.

But already in fourteenth-century manuscripts there is evidence of uncertainty. Scribes often omit the final vowel where the rhythm shows that it was syllabic in the original (see the language notes to I, II). Conversely, in *Gawayne* forms like *burne* (OE. *beorn*), *race* (ON. *rás*), *hille* (OE. *hyll*) appear in nominative and accusative, where historically there should be no ending. The explanation is that, quite apart from the workings of analogy, which now extended and now curtailed its historical functions, -e was everywhere weakly pronounced, and was dropped at different rates in the various dialects. In the North it hardly survives the middle of the century (iv a, x). In the N. Midlands its survival is irregular. In the South and S. Midlands it is fairly well preserved till the end of the century. But everywhere the proportion of flexionless forms was increasing. It may be assumed that, in speech as in verse, final -e was lost phonetically first before words beginning with a vowel or h.

§ 10. NOUNS: Gender, which in standard West Saxon had been to a great extent grammatical (i. e. dependent on the forms of the noun), was by the fourteenth century natural (i.e. dependent on the meaning of the noun). This change had accompanied and in some degree facilitated the transfer of nearly all nouns to the strong masculine type, which was the commonest and best defined in late OE.:

OE.	ME.	OE.	ME.
Sg. nom. acc. <i>cniht</i>	<i>knīzt</i>	Pl. nom. acc. <i>cnihtas</i>	<i>knīztes</i>
gen. <i>cnihtes</i>	<i>knīztes</i>	gen. <i>cnihta</i>	<i>knīztes</i>
dat. <i>cnihle</i>	<i>knīzte</i>	dat. <i>cnihtum</i>	<i>knīztes</i>

In the North final *-e* of the dat. sg. was regularly dropped early in the fourteenth century, and even in the South the dat. sg. is often uninflected, probably owing to the influence of the accusative. In the plural the inflexion of the nom. acc. spreads to all cases; but in early texts, and relatively late in the South, the historical forms are occasionally found, e.g. gen. pl. *cniste* (MS. *cnistes*) xv *g* 30 (note), dat. pl. *diaknen* III 5.

**Survivals:** (i) The common mutated plurals *man* : *men*, *fot* : *fet*, &c., are preserved, and in VIII *b* a gen. pl. *menne* (OE. *manna*) occurs; *ky* pl. of *cow* forms a new double pl. *kyn*, see (iii) below; *hend* pl. of *hand* is Norse, cp. XVI 75 (note).

(ii) Some OE. neuters like *shep* 'sheep' VIII *b* 18, *zer* 'year' II 492, *bing* II 218, *folk* II 389, resist the intrusion of the masculine pl. *-es* in nominative and accusative. Pl. *hors* II 304, XIII *a* 34 remains beside *horses* XIV *b* 73; but *deores* 'wild animals' occurs at XV *b* 29, where Modern English preserves *deer*.

(iii) In the South the old weak declension with pl. *-en* persists, though by the fourteenth century the predominance of the strong type is assured. The weak forms occur not only where they are historically justified, e.g. *eyzen* (OE. *ēagan*) II 111, but also by analogy in words like *honden* (OE. pl. *honda*) II 79, *tren* (OE. pl. *trēo*) XIII *a* 51, *platen* (OFr. *plate*) XV *g* 4. The inflexion still survives in three double plural formations: *children* VIII *b* 70 beside *childer* (OE. pl. *cildru*); *bretheren* VIII *a* 201 beside *brether* XVII 320 (OE. pl. *brōbor*); and *kyzn* IX 256 for *ky* (cp. (i) above). The OE. weak gen. pl. in *-ena* leaves its traces in the South, e.g. *knauene* VIII *b* 56, XV *h* 4, and unhistorical *lordene* VIII *b* 77.

(iv) The group *fader*, *moder*, *brober*, *doghter* commonly show the historical flexionless gen. sg., e.g. *doghtyr arme* I 136; *moder wombe* XI *b* 29 f.; *brother hele* XIII *a* 18; *Fadir voice* XVI 79.

(v) The historical gen. sg. of old strong feminines remains in *soule dede* (OE. *sāwle*) I 212; but *Lady day* (OE. *hlēfdīgan dæg*) I 242 is a survival of the weak fem. gen. sg.

**§ 11. ADJECTIVES.** Separate flexional forms for each gender

are not preserved in the fourteenth century; but until its end the distinction of strong and weak declensions remains in the South and South Midlands, and is well marked in the careful verse of Chaucer and Gower. The strong is the normal form. The weak form is used after demonstratives, *the, his, &c.*, and in the vocative. As types *god* (OE. *gōd*) 'good' and *grene* (OE. *grēnē*) 'green' will serve, because in OE. *grēnē* had a vowel-ending in the strong nom. sg. masc., while *gōd* did not. The ME. paradigms are:

Singular.		Plural.	
Strong	Weak	Strong and Weak	
<i>god</i>	<i>godē</i>	<i>godē</i>	
<i>grene</i>	<i>grene</i>	<i>grene</i>	

Examples: Strong sg. *a gret serpent* (OE. *grēat*) XII b 72; *an unkindē man* (OE. *uncynde*) XII b 1; *a stillē water* (OE. *stille*) XII a 83. Weak sg. *The gretē gastli serpent* XII b 126; *hire oghnē hertes lif* XII a 4; *O lef liif* (where the metre indicates *leuē* for the original) II 102. Strong pl. *þer wer widē wones* II 365. Weak pl. *the smalē stones* XII a 84.

Note that strong and weak forms are identical in the plural; that even in the singular there is no formal distinction when the OE. strong masc. nom. ended in a vowel (*grēnē*); that monosyllables ending in a vowel (e.g. *fre*), polysyllables, and participles, are usually invariable; and that regular dropping of final *-e* levels all distinctions, so that the North and N. Midlands early reached the relatively flexionless stage of Modern English.

**Survivals.** The *Ayenbyte* shows some living use of the adjective inflexions. Otherwise the survivals are limited to set phrases, e.g. gen. sg. *nones cunnes* 'of no kind', *enes cunnes* 'of any kind', xv g 20, 22. That the force of the inflexion was lost is shown by the early wrong analysis *no skynnes, al skynnes, &c.*

**Definite Article.** Parallel to the simplification of the adjective, the full OE. declension *sē, sēo, þæt, &c.*, is reduced to invariable *þe*. The *Ayenbyte* alone of our specimens keeps some of the older distinctions. Elsewhere traces appear in set phrases, e.g. neut. sg. *þat, þet* in *þat on* 'the one', *þat ober* 'the other' v 344, and, with wrong division, *þe ton* XI b 27.

*the toper* ix 4; neut. sg. dat. *þen* (OE. *þēm*), with wrong division, in *alle nale* (for *at þen ale*) viii a 109.

§ 12. PRONOUNS. In a brilliant study (*Progress in Language*, London 1894) Jespersen exemplifies the economy and resources of English from the detailed history of the Pronoun. In the first and second persons fourteenth-century usage does not differ greatly from that of the Authorized Version of the Bible. But the pronoun of the third person shows a variety of developments. In the singular an objective case replaces, without practical disadvantages, the older accusative and dative: *him* (OE. *hine* and *him*), *her(e)* (OE. *hie* and *hiere*), (*h*)*it* (OE. *hit* and *him*). The possessive *his* still serves for the neuter as well as the masculine, e.g. *hat ryuer . . . chaungeþ hys fordes* XIII a 55 f.; though an uninflected neuter possessive *hit* occasionally appears in the fourteenth century. In the plural, where one would expect objective *him* from the regular OE. dat. pl. *him*, clearness is gained by the choice of unambiguous *hem*, from an OE. dat. pl. by-form *heom*.

But as we see from *Orfeo*, ll. 408, 446, 185, in some dialects the nom. sg. masc. (OE. *hē*), nom. sg. fem. (OE. *hēo*), and nom. pl. (OE. *hīc*), had all become ME. *he*. The disadvantages of such ambiguity increased as the flexional system of nouns and adjectives collapsed, and a remedy was found in the adoption of new forms. For the nom. sg. fem., *s(c)he*, *s(c)ho* (mostly Northern), come into use, which are probably derived from *sīē*, *seō*, the corresponding case of the definite article. The innovation was long resisted in the South, and *ho*, an unambiguous development of *hed*, remains late in W. Midland texts like *Pearl*.

In the nom. pl. ambiguous *he* was replaced by *þei*, the nom. pl. of the Norse definite article. This is the regular form in all except the Southern specimens ii (orig.), iii, XIII. And although the full series of Norse forms *þei*, *þeir*, *þe(i)m* is found in *Orm* at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Chaucer and other Midland writers of the fourteenth century as a rule have only *þei*, with native English *hār(e)*, *hem* in the oblique cases. (For details see the language note to each specimen.)

The poss. pl. *her(e)*, beside *hār(e)*, was still liable to confusion with the obj. sg. fem. *her(e)*, cp. ii 92. Consequently this was

the next point to be gained by the Norse forms, e.g. in vii 181. In the Northern texts x, xvi, xvii, all from late MSS., the Norse forms *þai*, *þa(i)r*, *þa(i)me* are fully established; but *(h)em*, which was throughout unambiguous, survived into modern dialects in the South and Midlands.

Note the reduced nominative form *a* 'he', 'they' in xiii; and the objective *his(e)* 'her', 'them' in iii, which has not been satisfactorily explained.

**Relative:** The general ME. relative is *þat*, representing all genders and cases (note to xv 14). Sometimes definition is gained by adding the personal pronoun: *þat . . . he (sche)* = 'who'; *þat . . . it* = 'which'; *þat . . . his* = 'whose'; *þat . . . him* = 'whom', &c.; e.g. *a well, þat in the day it is so cold* ix 5-6, cp. v 127 (note); *oon That with a spere was thirled his brest-boon* 'one whose breast-bone was pierced with a spear', *Knight's Tale* 1851. For the omission of *þat* see note to xii 36.

In later texts, *which*, properly an interrogative, appears commonly as a relative, both with personal and impersonal antecedents, e.g. *Alceone . . . which . . . him loveth* xii a 3 ff.; *þat steede . . . fro whilke þe feende fell* xvi 13 f. Under the influence of French *lequel*, &c., *which* is often compounded with the article *þe*, e.g. *a gret serpent . . . the which* *Bardus anon up drouh* xii b 72 f.; *no thing of newe, in the whiche the hereres myghten hauen . . . solace* ix 275 f. Further compounding with *þat* is not uncommon, e.g. *the queen of Amazoine, the whiche þat maketh hem to ben kept in cloos* ix 190 f.

More restricted is the relative use of *whos*, *whom*, which are originally interrogatives, though both are found very early in ME. as personal relatives. Examples of the objective after prepositions are: *my Lady, of whom . . . vi 93*; *God, fro whom . . . ix 328 f.*; *my Sone . . . in whome* xvi 81 f. The possessive occurs in *Seynt Magne . . . yn whos wurschyp* 190 f.; *I am . . . the same, whos good* xii b 78 f.; and, compounded with the article, in *Morpheus*, the *whos nature* xii a 113. The nominative *who* retains its interrogative meaning, e.g. *But who ben more heretikis?* xi b 77 f.; or is used as an indefinite, e.g. *a tasse of grene stickes . . . to selle*, *who that wolde hem beie* xii b 22 ff.; but it is never used as a relative; and probably *what* in xvi 174 is better taken as in apposition to *myghtis* than as a true relative.

§ 13. VERB. Syntactically the most interesting point in the history of the ME. verb is the development of the compound tenses with *have*, *be*, *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *mun*, *can*, *gan*. But the flexional forms of the simple tenses are most subject to local variation, and, being relatively common, afford good evidence of dialect. Throughout the period, despite the crossings and confusions that are to be expected in a time of uncertainty and experiment, the distinction between strong and weak verbs is maintained; and it will be convenient to deal first with the inflexions common to both classes, and then to notice the forms peculiar to one or the other.

(i) **The Infinitive** had already in Northumbrian OE. lost final *-n*: *drīfa* 'to drive'. Hence in ME. of the North and N. Midlands the ending is *-e*, which becomes silent at varying rates during the fourteenth century; e.g. *dayue* i 171, *to luf* iv a 17. In the South and S. Midlands the common ending is *-e*, e.g. *telle* iii 3, which usually remains syllabic to the end of the century; but *-(e)n* is also found, especially in verse to make a rime or to avoid hiatus: e.g. *sein* (*:azein*) xii a 27; *to parte and ziven half his good* xii b 201.

(ii) **The Present Participle** (OE. *drīfende*) in the North and N. Midlands ends in *-and(e)*, though *-yng(e)*, *-ing(e)* is beginning to appear in v, vii, xvi, xvii. In S. Midlands the historical ending *-ende* still prevails in Gower; but Chaucer has more commonly *-yng(e)*; and in ix, xi, both late texts, only *-yng(e)* appears. In the South *-yng(e)* is established as early as the beginning of the century, e.g. in ii.

N.B. Carefully distinguish the verbal noun which always ends in *-yng(e)*. Early confusion resulted in the transference of this ending to the participle.

(iii) **Present Indicative.**

(a) Singular: OE. 1 *drīfe*, 2 *drīf(e)s(t)*, 3 *drīf(e)ð* (late Northumbrian *drīfes*).

In ME. *-e*, *-est*, *-ēþ* are still the regular endings for the South and most of the Midlands. Shortened forms like *fint* = *findeþ* ii 239; *stant* = *standeþ* xii a 74 are commonest in the South, where in OE. they were a feature of West Saxon and Kentish as distinguished from Anglian. Distinct are the Northern and N. Midland *mas(e)* 'makes', *tas* 'takes', with contracted

infinitives *ma*, *ta*; and *bus* 'behoves', which Chaucer uses in his imitation of Northern English, *Reeves Tale* 172.

In N. Midlands the modern 3rd sg. -(e)s is common (v, vi, but not in earlier 1). Farther North it is invariable (iv, x, xvi, xvii). The distribution of -es as the ending of the 2nd sg. is the same, and it is extended even to the 1st person.

(b) Plural: OE. *drifat* (late Northumbrian *drifas*).

Only Southern ME. retains the OE. inflexion as -eb (ii, iii, xiii). The Midland ending, whence the modern form derives, is -e(n); though in the N. Midlands -es occasionally appears. Northern has regularly -es, unless the personal pronoun immediately precedes, when the ending is -e, as in the Midlands, e.g. *hei make* xvi 103.

N.B. In applying this test, care must be taken to exclude inversions, which are subject to special rules; to distinguish the subjunctive (e.g. *falle* xiii a 52, *drawe* xiii b 6) from the indicative; and, generally, to choose examples that are syntactically free from doubt, because concord of number is not always logical in ME.

#### SUMMARY.

OE.	South	S. Midl.	N. Midl.	ME.
1. sg. <i>drif-e</i>	-e	-e	-(e)	(e) or (e)s
2. <i>drif-es(t)</i>	-est	-est	-es(t)	-es
3. <i>drif-eð</i> (Nth. -es)	-eb	-eb	-eb or -es	-es
pl. <i>drif-að</i> (Nth. -as)	-eb	-e(n)	-e(n) or -es	-es or -(e)

(iv) **The Imperative Plural** might be expected to agree with the pres. ind. pl. In fact it has the ending -eb not merely in the South, but in most of the Midlands, e.g. i, viii, Gower and Chaucer. Northern and NW. Midland (v, vi, xiv b, xvi) have commonly -es. But Chaucer, Gower, and most late ME. texts have, beside the full inflexion, an uninflexed form, e.g. *vndo* xvi 182.

•(v) **Past Tense.**

(a) **Strong**: The historical distinctions of stem-vowel were often obscured in ME. by the rise of new analogical forms, the variety of which can best be judged from the detailed evidence presented in the *New English Dictionary* under each verb. But, for the common verbs or classes, the South

and S. Midlands preserved fairly well the OE. vowel distinction of past tense singular and plural; while North and N. Midlands usually preferred the form proper to the singular for both singular and plural, e.g. *þey bygan* II 72; *þey ne blan* I 73; *thai slang* x 53, where OE. has sg. *gan* : *gunnon*; *blan* : *blunnon*; ON. *slong* : *slungu*.

(b) Weak: In the South and Midlands the weak pa. t. 2nd sg. usually ends in *-est* (N. Midland also *-es*): *hадest* II 573; *cursedest* I 130; *kyssedes, raztes* v 283. In the North, and sometimes in N. Midland, it ends in *-(e)*: *bou hadde* XVI 219. The full ending of the pa. t. pl. is fairly common in the South, S. Midlands, and NW. Midlands: *wenten* II 185, *heden* III 42, *maden* XII b 196, *sayden* VI 174.

(vi) **Past Participle (Strong)**: OE. *(ge)driſen*.

In the North and N. Midlands the ending *-er* is usually preserved, but the prefix *y-* is dropped. In the South the type is *y-driue*, with prefix and without final *n*. S. Midland fluctuates—for example, Gower rarely, Chaucer commonly, uses the prefix *y-*.

(vii) **Weak Verbs with *-i-* suffix**: In OE. weak verbs of Class II formed the infinitive in *-ian*, e.g. *acsian, lufian*, and the *i* appeared also in the pres. ind. and imper. pl. *acsiað* and pres. p. *acsiente*. In ME. a certain number of French verbs with an *-i-* suffix reinforced this class. In the South and W. Midlands the *-i-* of the suffix is often preserved, e.g. *aski* II 467, *louy* v 27, and is sometimes extended to forms in which it has no historical justification, e.g. pp. *spurved* v 25. In the North and the E. Midlands the forms without *i* are generalized.





